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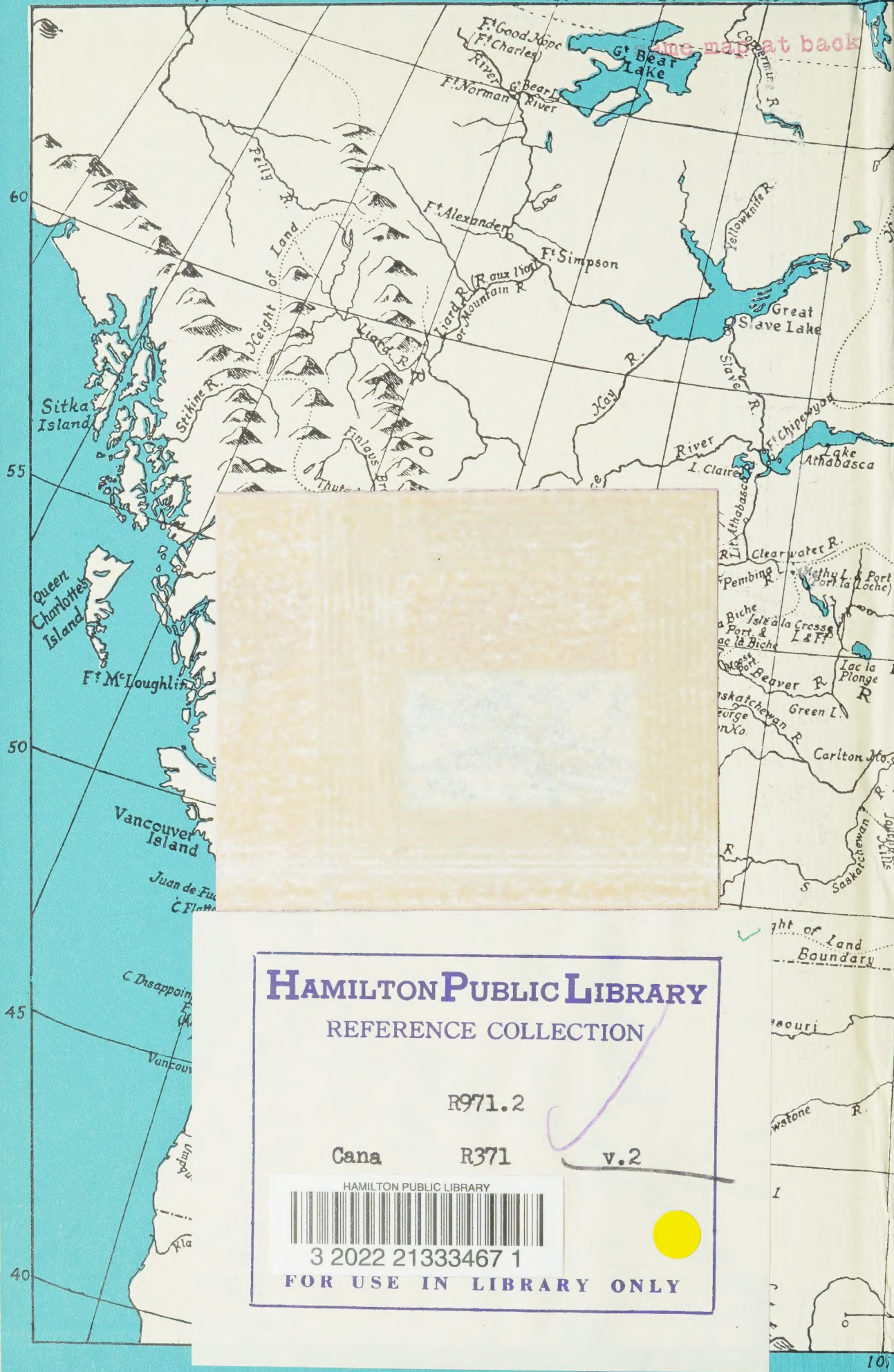
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THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE HUDSON'S BAY RECORD SOCIETY

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY
1670-1870

Volume II: 1763-1870



LONDON
THE HUDSON'S BAY RECORD SOCIETY

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THE HISTORY OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

1670-1870

Volume II: 1763-1870

BY

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third Governor

from a portrait by Kneller in the Company's possession

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BOOK FOUR

Rivalry from Montreal, 1763-1820

CHAPTER I

ENGLISH RULE AND THE CANADIAN TRADER

French rivalry on a national basis was over when the inland travellers from the posts by Hudson Bay found the French houses deserted in 1759. But a new phase in the history of the fur trade had started, for as soon as the capture of Montreal in 1760 sealed the fate of French Canada the traders, at Moose and elsewhere, began to complain of a fresh kind of opposition, from colonial British subjects who used the former French routes and methods. Yet for some time it was by no means clear that the transfer of Canada to British rule would open a serious opposition to the Company.

The Committee certainly anticipated no such result. While Isham attributed but little immediate importance to the capture of Quebec and thought that the increase in the trade of York in 1760 was 'no Ways On Account of our Success of arms at Quebec etc but by the Encouragement of the Master and Servants which has been Inland', the Albany letter of 1760 wrote of the capture of Quebec as a national advantage and a means of enlarging the Company's trade, and the Committee responded by sending to that post Jean Baptiste Larlee, a renegade Frenchman who had come down to York and had been sent inland with Joseph Smith and Henday, to push the Company's trade among the upland Indians. Larlee was to prove a failure; he prevented Henday's return inland in 1760 by being unable to travel, and after a very short service he was dismissed in 1763 for knocking down and beating the Indians—which, said the post-master Humphrey Marten, 'I know by experience is not the way to gain the Love of the Natives'. But Larlee had impressed the Committee with the opportunity to move in on the French preserves. He was accepted as 'an Allowed Chief' among the Indians, he brought down some of the Sturgeon River trade to Albany in 1761, and since he spoke the dialect he gave hopes of bringing in some Michipicoten trade to Moose in the following year. He undoubtedly

had some influence, and some contacts with the 'Natives of my Fort belonging to Lake Superior'; but while he maintained that any increase in trade was due to his personal persuasion and inveighed against the English consorting with Indian women and against their reluctance to set Henley House going again, the English traders maintained that the only reason for the increase in the trade at Moose was that the Indians resorted there because they wanted to avoid Larlee at Albany.

Whatever his merits or demerits, the Commiteee accepted the attacks on Larlee and dismissed him. But he was most useful in making it clear that French influence was still of great importance in the interior even after the great French citadels had fallen, in addition to any value he may have had in giving contacts with Indians so far afield as Lake Superior. Larlee made it clear, in addition, that although the *postes du nord*, in immediate rivalry with the Bay, were for the moment out of the picture, those further inland were still offering the Indians an alternative market; his Indians reported that as late as August 1761 the great emporium of Michilimackinac was still in French hands, while the post at Ste. Marie was being maintained by Indians as a base for trade to the Mississippi.

The attitude of the Indians was here of the first importance. For while the 'military régime' which took control after the formal surrender of Canada was astonishingly successful in keeping the French population in Canada, in adjusting English practices of government to French habits and laws, and in reconciling the French to British rule, it was by no means so successful with the Indians. The keynote of the 'règne militaire' was, as Amherst as Commander-in-Chief explained to Gage as Governor of Montreal, that 'These newly-acquired subjects, when they have taken the oath, are as much His Majesty's subjects as any of us, and are, so long as they remain deserving of it, entitled to the same protection'. The decree that the old laws would be retained, that the army was to pay its way, and that trade would be free, promised the best of both the French and the English régimes, and though nothing could mitigate the fact that they were a conquered people, the French found the behaviour of both officers and men a contrast to that which they had feared from the New England 'Bastonnais'. So the English were able to convince themselves that 'the soldiers live peaceably with the inhabitants, and they reciprocally acquire an affection for each other', and even that there was nothing the Canadians dreaded so much as the return of French rule. Perhaps the military commanders

flattered themselves in these terms, but they certainly tried to follow their military conquest by fair and conciliatory rule, and they provoked no active opposition from the French.

With the Indians they had no such success, and their attitude also was widely different. The French had mustered the Indians to take part in the war, especially during the early years; and the Hurons, the Ottawas and the western tribes, had remained in the French alliance throughout. The Iroquois, after a doubtful period, had come clearly on to the British side by 1760, and had helped to bring over the Delawares and the Shawnees. These, however, were not the tribes which controlled the posts of the west and north, and although these posts were surrendered to the English in 1760 the capitulation meant little. In September 1760, therefore, Amherst commanded the picturesque and forceful Major Robert Rogers (a native of New Hampshire) and his celebrated band of Rangers to ascend the Lakes and take possession of Detroit, Michilimackinac and the other western posts. Rogers enforced the surrender of Detroit, Miami and Ouatanon, but was prevented by weather from pushing on to Michilimackinac that winter. So that post, with its satellites at Ste. Marie, Green Bay and St. Joseph, remained in French hands until it was taken by a detachment of the Royal Americans in 1761.

The small garrisons, however, dealing with Indians whose minds had already been poisoned by the French and many of whom had given up hunting during the war and taken to living in comfortable dependence on food supplied by the French, treated the Indians with a harshness which seemed to confirm the warnings which the French had given. 'Nor can I think it necessary to give them any presents by way of *Bribes*', wrote Amherst, 'for if they do not behave properly they are to be punished'. English settlement, especially among the Delawares and among the Mohawks, added to the Indian fears; and the French fur-traders and half-breeds scattered among them fanned their rising hostility with rumours of a French revival and of English military defeat. 'Englishman, although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us. We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods and mountains, were left to us by our ancestors. They are our inheritance: and we will part with them to none'. So spoke the Chief of the Ojibwas (Chipewas) to Alexander Henry when the latter ventured to Michilimackinac in 1761. It was a general feeling. An Indian rising was nipped in the bud in 1761, another in 1762, and in 1763 came the great and well-planned Conspiracy of Pontiac, led by the powerful chief of the Ottawas,

aiming to attack all the fortified posts on the same day and then to destroy the settlements.

Pontiac's conspiracy was crushed; but it revealed the need for a constructive policy towards the Indians and their lands, and it revealed the dangers to which the fur-traders in their outposts were liable. Both were factors which had been overlooked in the British policy during the 'règne militaire'. The soldiers, so careful in their treatment of the French, had adopted much of the New England attitude to the Indians, in which neglect 'to cultivate a proper understanding' was a result as much of national character as of conflict over land rights. By 1763 Amherst was thinking in terms of a war of complete extermination, even of spreading small-pox among the disaffected tribes, and was treating the Indians more as brutes than as human beings. The murder of the garrison of Presqu'Isle after their surrender left him convinced that nothing but fear would ever prevent the Indians from committing all the cruelties in their power. The treachery of the Indian attacks left no room for the niceties of 'civilised warfare' and even Sir William Johnson (of whom so much has been made as a man beloved alike by whites and Indians, finding favour by his direct and upright dealings) concluded that the Indian prisoners 'should be tortured as they do our people'. The Indians were still under the influence of the French and the half-breeds, and subject to their promises of a revival in French power; 'all the promises, tho' ever so well performed on our part, or from whoever they came, availed not, if they had anyone to tell them that the English intended them any evil'.

The corrective of this grave defect came when the Peace of Paris had been signed and it was decreed that specified Indian reserves should be set apart from the government of the Province of Quebec, that there should be no private purchase of lands from Indians, and that the trade with the Indians should be under a proper system of licences and controls. This was a most enlightened policy; so much so that the resultant restrictions on settlement played their part in provoking differences of opinion between colonists and mother-country. But while the settlers' frontier could thus be stabilised and controlled, at least for the moment, the frontier of trade proved more elusive and mobile.

The fur-trading aspect of its conquest had been but slowly accepted by the British government. At the time of the surrender of Montreal it had been enough to accept the proposal that the officers of the *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* should be allowed passage to France and should take their company's papers (uninspected) with

them; they should also retain possession of their 'écarlatines' and their furs, and should be allowed to ship the furs to France. Individual French settlers and traders were likewise confirmed in their property, and the traders were given the right to ship their furs to France if they wished, to retain any furs which were then in the inland posts, and to fit out canoes at any time in the next two years for the purpose of bringing such furs down to Montreal. They were to enjoy all the same rights as the English 'as well in the countries above, as the interior of the colony'. This was in September 1760, and it was under these terms that the French and half-breeds had persisted in the inland posts.

Neither the fur trade nor the limits of the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company were mentioned in the Definitive Treaty of Peace signed at Paris in February 1763. Those were now matters which the cession of Canada turned into disputes between different sections of His Majesty's subjects. No aliens were now concerned, so the trade and the boundaries did not need to be mentioned in a treaty of peace with the King of France. Moreover, both governments were far more concerned with the cod fishery and with shipping than with the fur trade. Even the merchants concerned in the trade to Canada from France passed over the cession of the fur trade almost in silence. But when the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations began to consider the consequences of the Peace they concluded that, after the fishing rights, the next most obvious advantage gained by Great Britain was the fur and skin trade. This the French had controlled (except for the 'exclusive Company of Hudson's Bay and a very inconsiderable quantity thro' the Province of New York') because they had gained control of all the lakes communicating with the St. Lawrence, and because of the well-chosen forts and posts which they had built in that area. The trade would now be in the hands of British subjects, as would the posts themselves, and seemed to need an adequate military force and suitable regulations for dealings with the Indians. English traders would now get the task of supplying all the wants of the Indians with European goods of English manufacture, a trade so important that merchants of London and New York had formerly engaged in supplying the Indians indirectly through the French of Montreal rather than lose such a market.

The fur trade therefore was accepted as important. The rulers of England tried to stabilise it and to direct it to England. The Commissioners proposed a large tract of country around the Lakes, which should be left 'as an Indian Country, open to Trade but not

to Grants and Settlements'; the bounds and details were to be settled later, and in the meantime they thought that the existing forts and garrisons could preserve peace and that such reserves should rank with Newfoundland and Senegal as territories in which no permanent settlement was contemplated and in which, therefore, no regular government would be necessary. The tract 'which in your Majesty's justice and humanity, as well as in sound Policy, is proposed to be left under your Majesty's immediate Protection to the Indian Tribes for their hunting grounds' was to be open to all British subjects and colonies, a 'free Trade with the Indian tribes' subject to such regulations as might seem necessary.

In general terms the Commissioners proposed that 'all the Lands lying about the Great Lakes and beyond the sources of the Rivers, which fall into the River St. Lawrence from the North' should be thrown into this Indian reservation, and that though it was unnecessary to state the boundaries with any precision yet Canada should be bounded to the south-east by the height of land running from Cap Rosier in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the point of Lake Champlain above St. John's which was in latitude 45° North, that is the watershed between the rivers falling into the St. Lawrence and those falling into the Bay of Fundy. On the south-west the boundary should lie on a line from this same point on Lake Champlain due west to the River St. Lawrence and so by the Ottawa River to Lake Nipissing. Here at the eastern end of the Lake was to be the end of the north-west boundary of Canada, a line from River St. John in Labrador along the Height of Land to Lake Nipissing. Canada was therefore to be limited off from the sea-coast and from the vast expanses of the interior; the new French subjects of His Majesty were to be separated from the chances of developing shipping (which would go to the English of Nova Scotia); and they were also to be prevented (as were the English) from 'removing and settling in remote places where they neither could be so conveniently made amenable to the Jurisdiction of any Colony, nor made subservient to the Interests of the Trade and Commerce of this Kingdom'.

But while Canada was thus to be circumscribed, and a vast Indian reservation was proposed, there was still no word of the need to define any boundary between Rupert's Land and the Indian reservation. Nor was such a definition attempted when the Royal Proclamation of 7th October, 1763, set out the terms for the new colony. With the minor modification that the boundaries met at the southern, instead of the eastern, end of Lake Nipissing, the Commissioners' proposals were adopted and the Indians were confirmed in their

hunting grounds. For Canada this was specified as a veto on the grant by the Governor of Quebec of lands in the Indian territory. Private purchases of land from Indians were also forbidden, any whites who had already settled were to remove themselves, and in future the Indians were only to sell their lands to the Crown. This policy was also to apply to the main American colonies, where the watershed of the rivers falling into the Atlantic was to mark the western boundary of settlement. The Indian reservation was given a residuary definition in the Proclamation; that is to say it retained under Royal protection, for the use of the Indians, all lands which were not specifically ascribed to other purposes, to the government of Quebec or to the Hudson's Bay Company. The rights of the Company were therefore recognised, but they were not closely defined except in so far as the Indian reservation was to include all lands to the west of the sources of the rivers which fell into the sea from the west and north-west. In this Indian territory it was declared that trade with the Indians should be free and open to all subjects of the Crown, provided that all traders must take out licences; the licences were to be free, without fee or reward, but all holders were to give security that they would obey all regulations which might be made for the Indian trade.

In effect the decisions of 1763 meant that the West was to be closed to settlement. This was in opposition to the views of Amherst, who had envisaged a vast new western colony. It was an official endorsement by the Lords of Trade for the views of Sir William Johnson and it tied in with the appointment of Gage to supersede Amherst as Commander-in-Chief while Johnson became one of the two Superintendents for Indian affairs, with jurisdiction north of the Ohio.

The duty of enforcing the Proclamation, and of devising suitable regulations for the Indian trade, devolved upon Governor Murray, who took up his new position as Civil Governor in 1764. He already had experience as military Governor of Quebec, and the situation which he found also had its roots in the military period. For on the heels of the military there had moved into Canada the advance-guard of an English and New-English trading community, some of them following the army as sutlers, some drawn by Amherst's invitation to the 'traders and adventurers' whom he needed to re-establish the economic life of Canada. Politically and socially estranged from the military rulers, they nevertheless commanded credit in England and were soon able to ship out considerable quantities of English manufactures.

It was the more adventurous members of this group of 'old subjects' of the British Crown who moved outwards from Quebec and Montreal, often in alliance with 'new subjects' of French origin, renewed the fur-trade rivalry in the *postes du nord* which had disturbed the Hudson's Bay men in the last years of the war, and ultimately challenged the limitations on the trade which had been imposed by the Proclamation of 7th October, 1763, and by subsequent legislation.

Examples of this movement are not numerous, but they are revealing. Forrest Oakes, James Stanley and William Grant, for example, formed themselves in September 1761 into a partnership which they called the 'N.W. Société' for the purpose of outfitting a Frenchman, de la Fleur, for a voyage to Michilimackinac. More adventurous since he went inland himself, and more revealing since he left an account of his journey, Alexander Henry (the elder) also set out for Michilimackinac in that year. With some previous experience of the fur trade at Albany behind him, he had engaged in the business of supplying the British army at Oswego and had followed it to Montreal. There, in 1760 and 1761, he purveyed to traders going inland the goods which he had obtained from Albany until, late in 1761, he formed a partnership with a French trader, Etienne Campion. He then set out in August, with permission from General Gage, for the great entrepôt of the fur trade, Michilimackinac. There the Indians brought their furs to trade, and the returns were assembled for the journey down to Montreal. There also, though it was strictly forbidden by the regulations, outfits were got ready for clandestine voyages into the upper country, for Lake Superior and the north-west, Lake Michigan and the Mississippi. At Michilimackinac also the Indian corn, upon which the *voyageurs* had come to depend during their journeys, was to be obtained from the neighbouring Indian villages. Though forced to disguise himself as a French *voyageur* on the journey, so as to evade the hostility of the Indians towards the English, Alexander Henry reached Michilimackinac in safety. But he had arrived ahead of the troops who were to replace the French garrison, and found himself in danger first from the Ojibwas (Chipewas) and then from the Ottawas. The danger was ended by the arrival of the troops, but Henry and two other traders who had arrived a short time after him were lucky not to have all their goods plundered, and they found the French and the half-breeds unhelpful.

The Royal Americans stabilised the situation at Michilimackinac, and Henry and his fellows embarked on their trade. But in 1763,

when the genius of Pontiac had gone into the co-ordination of Indian discontents, Michilimackinac was the scene of a treacherous massacre, combined with some ritual cannibalism, from which Henry only escaped by taking refuge in the house of a French half-breed with an Indian wife, to spend the winter, after many dangers and a rescue from assassination due to the friendship of a Chipewa chief, hunting and living on berries in the neighbourhood of Lake Huron. It was a story which epitomised the hold which the French retained on the loyalty of the Indians of the outposts, the need for the English government to think out some balanced Indian policy, and the mixture of economic competence and personal determination which characterised the men who, in the new British régime, controlled and used the old French routes to the lands at the back of the Company's posts. For Alexander Henry, despite his appalling experiences, did not quit the fur trade. It was 1766 before he found his way back to Montreal again, and in the meantime he had travelled over the watershed into the drainage basin of the Pacific Ocean, had made a great fortune, and had become one of the dominating personalities of the fur trade of the north-west.

Alexander Henry was outstanding, and he left his own account of his doings. But he was not unique. Two other traders, Goddard and Solomons, had followed him into Michilimackinac in 1761; there were at least two others, Tracy and Bostwick, there at the time of the massacre of 1763, and there was the Frenchman, de la Fleur, whom Forrest Oakes and his partners had fitted out for Michilimackinac in 1761. These men can be named; and there were others. The Hudson's Bay Company Committee in London received from their traders reports which gave evidence of a considerable number of such traders and, not unnaturally, were most impressed when their own former servants came to light as 'pedlars'. Joseph Isbister in particular seemed to be a reasonable cause for worry, for he had great qualities. As Chief at Albany he had been always active, eager for pushing trade to the Eastmain and establishing the pioneer inland settlement at Henley House on his own responsibility. When Quebec fell he had left the service of the Company and had begun to trade from Canada to the north-west on his own account, evading the restrictions which would have confined him to a post, and emulating the Pedlars whom he had formerly opposed so vigorously. With a life-time's knowledge of the fur trade and of the ways and mentality of the Indians behind him, Isbister could have made a powerful opposition, and Ferdinand Jacobs, the experienced Chief of York Fort, saw an especial menace in him. But in fact all of Isbister's

experience went for nothing although he got very substantial financial backing for his venture. In 1764 the York Fort Indians brought the news that 'Mr. Isbester and Patterson with others and nigh 100 men in 15 Large Canoes are Comming up to the Back of Your Settlements to Trade where the French had their Houses'. The Indians added that this large party would have arrived in 1763, but they had got drunk and stove in their canoes.

Joseph Isbister by reason of his Company service (and his failure notwithstanding), and Alexander Henry by reason of his stirring adventures and his success, were perhaps exceptional. But others also were in the field, French and English alike. There was certainly the essential ingredient of competition, an alternative market for the Indians 'at the back' of the Company's posts during the last years of the war and the early years of the peace. However individualistic, ill-co-ordinated, and at the mercy of the Indians the opposition might be—and it is worth noting that Henry and Isbister were not the only ones, nor the last, to suffer in this way; it was reported that an expedition of 1765, and another of 1766, were despoiled at Rainy Lake—the very fact of such opposition was enough to enhance prices, to destroy the dependence of the Indians and to change the bases of trade.

Amherst persisted in seeing rivalry between the French and the English in this renascent fur trade of the north-west. On the one hand he imputed his troubles with the Indians to the influence of the French traders and their efforts in 'trying to engross the trade to themselves and to exclude totally the British merchants'; on the other hand he felt that 'The English merchants will always accuse the Canadians and it is difficult to come at the truth'. The truth seems to have been that there was as much collaboration as rivalry between the 'old' and the 'new' subjects. Failing instructions from the Lords of Trade, Sir William Johnson as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northern Department had drawn up a 'Plan for the Regulation of the Fur Trade' in August 1764. Under this plan the trade was confined to the posts, and traders were allowed to go inland from Quebec and Montreal, to trade at the posts only and not elsewhere, under licence and bond. For the north-west this meant that trade with the Indians could only take place at Michilimackinac or its dependencies at Ste. Marie, Green Lake or St. Joseph's, and before a Commissioner who was supposed to safeguard the interests of the Indians. Although under this system Michilimackinac was reported to be trading without interruption by 1765, it was stifling the fur trade and it did not give the Indians that

trade in the woods which they wanted, and for which they preferred to go to the French traders from the south. There was a serious danger of turning the trade from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi.

Even so, it is clear that the trade at Michilimackinac had a periphery of unlicensed trade. It was not a negligible proportion of the trade, this part that evaded the regulations. By 1766 Alexander Henry and his partner Cadotte brought down from Fond du Lac fifteen hundred pounds of beaver in addition to otter and marten, and in the next year over a hundred canoes came to Michilimackinac from the north-west, laden with beaver of which some share was still owned by the Indians who brought it, but the rest was the property of the traders who had gone out to trade in the woods. Such wholesale evasion of Johnson's Regulations was in part clandestine, in part open and known to the officials. For the Indians had protested against the long journeys which they had to make to trade at Michilimackinac and had forced him to give licences to a few traders (mostly French) to winter among them. This was the breach in the strict regulations laid down by Sir William Johnson of which Alexander Henry had taken advantage; and the number of such licences was greatly increased when Major Rogers took command. In addition there were some traders, both French and English, who wintered with the Indians without even the pretence of a licence.

In this expansion and revival of the trade of the north-west there was indeed so much of Anglo-French rivalry that Governor Murray found the 'new subjects' of French extraction far more amenable than the influx of 'old subjects' of British origin who came into Canada to trade. These 'Licentious Fanaticks Trading here', as he called them, would be satisfied with nothing short of the expulsion of the French. They certainly protested against the alleged partiality of Murray and his officials in giving licences so freely to Frenchmen, and they even went so far as to appoint a London barrister, Fowler Walker, to act as their agent in England. But French and English combined to protest against the whole system of a trade confined to the posts, which was the essence of William Johnson's Regulations. With a new Lieutenant-governor in the person of Carleton more amenable than Murray had been, opinion in favour of a trade free and open to all gathered weight in a stream of petitions and memoranda which converted the Lieutenant-governor and even wrested concessions from Sir William Johnson. Trade was allowed in the villages to the north and west of the Lakes.

The problem, however, was too great to be controlled by such concessions. The Canadians flouted the limitation of the 'open

trade' to the villages of the north and west and traded even in Johnson's own district north of the Ohio. And under Rogers the licences from Michilimackinac were far too open and numerous to be shuffled off. He presented to the Board of Trade (with the assistance of General Gage) a proposal that Michilimackinac should be made a separate colony under his own government, and he threatened to go over to the French if refused. Raising once more the smoke-screen of a plan to reach China by way of the prairies, he got the Board's permission to send out exploring parties, and under this pretence he equipped the voyages of James Carver and then of James Tute, and he licenced undisguised trading expeditions to the Saskatchewan and to the Assiniboine. With such connivance and support from officials, the traders were able to invade the Indian territories to such effect that by 1767 there seemed no remedy save a change in official policy. Lieutenant-governor Carleton was converted, and in March 1767 advised strongly that the traders should be freely allowed to trade in the Indian villages; Gage as Commander-in-Chief was also won over, and advised that the provincial governors should be allowed to regulate the trade at their own discretion; and Lord Shelburne, with an emphasis on the economies which might be secured by doing so, urged the Board of Trade to turn the management of the Indian trade over to the care of the colonies themselves.

In the result the colonies took no effective action to replace the imperial restrictions on settlement by local rules; the frontier of settlement degenerated despite the renewal (at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768) of the promise to allow no settlement beyond a fixed boundary. But the traders from Canada profited enormously from the new system. They had been most severely restricted by the previous rules, which had affected the southern trade and the men of New York and Albany but little. Their long journey to Michilimackinac had been obstructed by the system of licences lasting for a year only in a way from which the New Englanders were exempt; for so long a journey could not be made within the year, and it could not be made without casual trade *en route*, to get provisions. Now they were free to press for a policy to suit their peculiar difficulties, and with Carleton on their side they prospered. They developed a system of shipping on the Great Lakes, set up a rendezvous at Sault Ste. Marie, and also began to push their trade south of the Lakes in rivalry with the middle colonies.

While the local power of regulation allowed the men of Quebec to emphasise their rivalry with those of Albany and New York, the

deterioration of the Indian frontier in the south brought into action Lord Hillsborough, who had succeeded Shelburne as Secretary of State. Reluctant to accept responsibility or cost, Hillsborough was nevertheless forced into some sort of positive action. But the action he took was to renounce responsibility. Trying to ride roughshod as a practical man over the legal niceties ('of which I pretend not to be a Judge') he declared that the cause of the troubles was that 'It was most unfortunate for the Colony of Quebec that weak, ignorant and interested Men' should have been sent to carry the settlement into effect. But he then turned to the economic problems and ordered all governors to declare that henceforth the Indian trade should be unrestricted and open.

So in April 1768 began a new era in the history of the fur trade. Already, under the local arrangements set up in 1767, the Quebec merchants had been able to exploit the advantages which they gained from the system of rivers and lakes which gave them access to the north-west—a system which demanded light trade-goods, a dispersed trade system and some sort of trafficking for food on the long journey, in contrast with the New England advantage of access to the sea, which led to trade in heavy goods and a preference for a confined trade at the posts. Now trade was truly free, and from Quebec and Montreal began what has been called 'the rush of the English into Rupert's Land'. This was no novelty, it was not confined to the English (though their active participation became more noticeable) and the colourful phrase must not be allowed to leave an impression of anything like a Gold Rush. The numbers of men concerned were small, their trade posts could only be limited; but in the Indian trade it must always be borne in mind that the very fact of opposition anywhere within two months' travel rendered the trade subject to all the reactions of competition.

In 1770 there were but three hundred and sixty Englishmen (heads of families some of them) in all the Province of Quebec, chiefly resident in the towns of Quebec and Montreal and insignificant in the Province as a whole, since it was over three hundred miles long and of vast width. The numbers of fresh English settlers in Quebec are, however, little indication as to the numbers or the importance of the English who were engaged in the fur trade. For many still based their operations on Albany; and a marked feature was the way in which the skill and knowledge of the French traders was co-ordinated by means of partnerships with Englishmen. The business of shipping the furs to Europe was entirely in British hands and directed to England, almost exclusively to London. So, in

counterpart, was the business of supplying the trade with manufactured goods, spirits and tobacco. Witney blankets, various woollen cloths, cotton and linens, ironware, copper, brass and tin kettles, guns and powder, with paints, beads and ornaments, continued to predominate. It was a conservative trade, but it was in the hands of thrustful men, who soon established direct trade relations between both Quebec and Montreal and London. They thereby set up just the sort of independent fur trade, based on London merchants engaged in the supply trade, which the Hudson's Bay Committee had feared ever since Arthur Dobbs had revealed to the London men something of the possibilities of the North American Indian as a consumer of British manufactures and of fur as a return cargo.

One result of this was a political agitation against the customs duties on beaver skins such as the Hudson's Bay men had never dreamed of instituting. The Board of Trade was won over and recommended the entire abolition of the duties, but the government retained a nominal duty of a penny a skin in 1765. At the same time the hatters and manufacturing furriers succeeded in getting an export duty of sevenpence on each beaver skin and of a shilling and sixpence on each pound of beaver-wool, so that their supplies should not be drained off by the new vigour shown in the trade to Europe.

The activity and the organisation shown in the fur trade is revealed by the details of the licences issued from Michilimackinac. Of those licenced to winter in the North-west in 1767 only one was English—Thomas Corry, licenced for Kaministikwia—one was an officer from the garrison, and the remaining five were Frenchmen with English backing. There were certainly some traders who evaded the system of licences, and it is probable that a post on the Saskatchewan was in occupation from 1767 onwards. But even so the actual numbers either of Frenchmen or of Englishmen who ventured north-west from Michilimackinac were minute. They had, however, gathered sufficient weight to secure the freeing of the Indian trade, to get political support and financial backing in London, and to make the Hudson's Bay Company re-assess its basic policy.

The Hudson's Bay Company's Committee was not slow to appreciate the threat to its privileges implied in this development of the 'Pedlars from Quebec', as they called this new opposition. They kept themselves informed of the trade as it developed; and, indeed the Hudson's Bay Company's Committee was probably the best informed authority on these developments, for they alone com-

manded a service of letters, reports and journals, which covered the whole of the territory in which the new partnerships were working out their methods. Certainly the Hudson's Bay documents now provide a vital source of information as to the developments of the Canadian traders, and probably they were also the best contemporary account.

The practice of sending suitable men on inland journeys, which Isham had started, and to which Henday had made so notable a contribution, was continued after Isham was dead, and after Henday, still classified only as a labourer and a netmaker, had been brought home in 1762. The 'two Josephs' (Smith and Waggoner) were the chief followers of the Henday tradition, but in 1759 Isham had four men inland '3 Different ways' from York—Smith, Waggoner, Isaac Batt and George Potts. He maintained that such voyages were responsible for the increase of trade at York, and he and his men managed to maintain friendly relations with the French inland, even after the formal outbreak of war between England and France. At the coast the Chiefs received full information of the French posts and even an offer to share the trade, while inland the Englishmen met the same sort of friendly treatment as had surprised Henday (ready to be killed as he was). 'What if the King of England and the French King are att warrs together', said the French, 'that is no Raison why we should.'

The expeditions were continued and were supported from London, though with a caution against promising extra wages to servants who were willing to go inland. Perhaps as a result of this rather mean policy the Company was not in a position to grasp the great opportunity for which it had been waiting for so many years. In 1761 all the Indians agreed that the French had quitted their huts in the fall of 1760, so that the chance for the English to make a great push to capture the affections of the Indians would be by sending inland in 1762. Many Indians who used to 'lie about' the French posts at Basquia and their other huts on the Saskatchewan had been forced to come down to trade at the Bay in 1761, and they had lost the advantage of having Europeans compete for their furs. But in 1762 York was unable to send any men inland. All the capable men had been discharged, and the Chief could do no more than promise to send inland at the first opportunity.

In 1763, however, penetration was again in hand. The Committee were urgent, for the re-deployment of the Canadians from the centre of the licenced trade at Michilimackinac was having its inevitable repercussions; moreover, the Committee regarded the

increase of trade by such voyages as a 'real Extention' of business, different from the poaching of trade from one Company post to another (especially from Churchill to York), which was merely a cause of extra work and expense. In 1762 and 1763, therefore, Isaac Batt was again retained (as a labourer at ten pounds a year with a promise of a gratuity); Joseph Waggoner was re-engaged for three years and Henry Pressick, a sailor, was re-engaged at twenty pounds a year. Pressick had been in the country since 1759, a stout young man who had been sent right into the Archthinue country in 1761; this was a mission in the footsteps of Henday which was looked upon as full of promise for a great increase of trade since the French were already losing their hold on the Blackfeet. But Pressick was especially warned that he might easily spoil his chances by being 'too busy with Indians wives, so as to Create a Misunderstanding, which may be Your Own Ruin'.

This was an active, and apparently successful, policy. But as peace, and British possession of Canada, ushered in a new era it seemed to have achieved little. Batt and Joseph Smith were sent inland in 1763; Smith, Batt and John Taylor went in 'in another Part of the Country' in 1764, and their instructions were not only to bring down the Indians to trade by the Bay, to see to it that the Indian way of life did not induce them to forget their duty to God, and to hand in their private trappings on their return, but also to enquire about the 'people of Canada'. But Pressick returned home in bad health in 1763, Smith died on his journey back from his inland voyage in 1764, and Joseph Waggoner was 'unfortunately drowned' in 1766, while John Taylor refused to make any further inland voyages. Despite these losses the Committee approved of the policy of sending inland and did their best to recruit suitable men. Joseph Smith's journals had so far been the only ones to come to hand except for Henday's; and Smith's were largely incomprehensible. But Smith was only a degree less illiterate than the others, who made no attempt to keep a journal, so in 1765 the Committee suggested that James Spence, a sailor, should be sent in the hope that he might keep a journal which would give some real information. Spence does not appear to have made a journey, but Ferdinand Jacobs (on the eve of handing over the temporary mastership at York to Andrew Graham while he himself was in England) engaged and sent inland a Canadian deserter, Louis Primeau, in 1765. Primeau was also illiterate, but skilled in the ways of the woods and in the Indian languages; his engagement was on the express understanding that he was to go inland yearly, and though both the Committee and

Ferdinand Jacobs never felt completely assured as to his loyalty (their suspicions were justified, for he ultimately deserted again) they were glad to employ him. Primeau, however, was an outstanding example of the ravages which disease could wreak when neglected in such conditions as were inevitable in a *coureur de bois's* life. He was forced by venereal disease to remain at York instead of going inland in 1768, and when the Committee heard of this they fondly hoped that he had not got any insight into the Company's trade methods during the winter.

With these troubles and difficulties, the Company nevertheless had a party of about six men capable of travelling inland, and willing to do so, at the time that the Montreal and Quebec merchants were pushing out from Michilimackinac and reaching once more to the Saskatchewan and even beyond. In 1766 six men, including Primeau, went inland from York, a team which was to repeat the venture in subsequent years. Edward Lutit went up the North Saskatchewan to the Stone Indians who had never had an Englishman with them before. The others were equally enterprising; Primeau went to Churchill River, James Dearing to the Red Deer River of modern Alberta, James Allen to the North Saskatchewan, Batt (probably) to the Sturgeon River, and William Pink to the South Saskatchewan, the area from which Smith had drawn down trade until his death.

These travellers spread from York to the west and north; the Saskatchewan and the Churchill rivers drained the areas which they covered. They increased the trade at York to over thirty thousand Made-beaver, but they brought back no news of the Pedlars from Canada since they did not touch the Indians of the Red River or the Assiniboine. In 1767-8 they went in much the same directions. But this time they brought different news. William Pink wrote that at the Pas (Basquia) on the Saskatchewan he learned from Indians that the French were near at hand, and he found them using goods which they had traded from the French. He went on to winter on or near Beaver River in Alberta. On his return journey in the early summer of 1768, after he had joined forces with James Allen and James Dearing, as he was paddling down the Saskatchewan, he suddenly came in sight of a new French house. The chief was 'Shash' or Saswe, the Indian name for François le Blanc, or Franceways; in addition there were twelve other Frenchmen there. Other French masters inland, reported to the Committee by Ferdinand Jacobs, were Poe'ess whose French name was Louis Bee'solat (Bissolet or Bissonet) and Rosea'a'prue (probably Joseph Proulx). They told

Pink that two canoes and many Englishmen from Montreal were coming inland to join them and that they were going upstream to build a proper house. They had, in fact, all the appearance of offering to the Indians a well-established and permanent trade; they were well-gooded, and mere promises of fair treatment at York or Churchill could not prevent the Indians from trading with them. Nevertheless Pink and his companions managed to cajole eighty canoes into continuing their journey down to York and Churchill; eighteen of them took the route through Cumberland Lake to Churchill, while the remainder, together with Isaac Batt who had spent the winter on the upper Assiniboine, brought their trade to York. But this was a trade from which the French had culled all the best furs, and the Indians were in the mood of those who have an alternative market ready to hand.

This brought a sudden awakening to York. Trade dropped from the 31,000 skins of 1767 to a mere 18,000 in 1768, and whereas Ferdinand Jacobs had not mentioned French rivalry in his report of 1767, his letters of 1768 were full of the problems involved. At the other posts the revelation of the new drive in the opposition was not so startling, for symptoms had already been seen. At Albany trade had fallen off as early as 1766. For this an Indian war was avowed as the cause, but in the following year the trade showed all the signs of competition. The Indians brought no beaver or marten, and they said that they had been able to trade through the winter with an English post inland.

Severn, too, was feeling the effects of the way in which the Pedlars were setting themselves up from 1766 onwards on the Red River and the Assiniboine, for this was an area from which Albany and Severn drew much of their trade, though York was hardly affected. Consequently the Master at Severn, Andrew Graham, chose William Tomison and sent him inland, in 1767, fitted out in the same manner as the men from York—that is to say, with goods for presents but not for trade, since the object was always to draw the Indians down to the Bay, not to rival the Pedlars by trading inland. Tomison worked his way inland up the Severn River, through the lakes from which it flows and so down to Lake Winnipeg. Here he found a concourse of Indians waiting for the arrival of the Pedlars, and full of information of a house on the Red River held by an Englishman (probably Forrest Oakes) and another held by a Frenchman. Both houses had been occupied in 1766 and their chiefs were away at the Grand Portage when Tomison arrived in September. Tomison got further news of three houses to the west,

and he actually met François le Blanc (Franceways or Saswe) as he went inland, outfitted by a trader from Montreal, to set up the trading house above the Pas on the Saskatchewan at which William Pink saw him in the spring of 1768. After wintering at Lake Winnipeg, Tomison worked westwards to Red River in the spring and came on the ruins of two French houses of the de la Vérendrye period and then returned to Severn. He, like Pink and his companions, had been quite unable to prevent the Indians from trading with the Pedlars and he was quite outspoken in saying that it was only a desire for Brazil tobacco which ever drew the Indians down to the Bay now that rivalry in the interior had started again.

Tomison lost his Journal of this voyage when he overset his canoe in striking at a sturgeon in the last stages of his return, but his journey was in any case a disappointment, and Graham resolved not to send him inland again.

At York the reports of William Pink and his companions had left Ferdinand Jacobs equally doubtful. He finally decided to send his six men inland again in 1768, but added that he could not say much 'with regard to their Influence'. He realised that he had been deceived in 1767, when the Indians had told him there were no Pedlars inland from his post, and he now wrote of the Canada Pedlars being spread all over the heart of the trading Indians' country, equipped with large quantities of trading goods. Graham from Severn, basing himself on Tomison's report, also told the Committee of vast numbers of Pedlars, and Jacobs asked London for explicit orders as to his conduct. He wanted 'to remove those thieves off your Land', and he saw no remedy but force. This was the counsel of desperation; but Jacobs was utterly dejected at the decline in his trade and at the news that although his men had actually been present when their Indians traded with the French they had been quite powerless to prevent them.

It was this dismal failure, which drove Jacobs into constructive planning, which led to a new policy of the greatest significance. For, wrote Jacobs, his men would be of much more use in opposing the Pedlars 'were they to be Sent up in a Body with a Carefull Prudent man to Command them and to Build a House or Houses in the most Convenient Places'. He suggested a need of from fifteen to twenty-five men for this purpose, and he argued that they should use boats, light, portable and of shallow-draft, since it was impossible to get large canoes built at or near York.

This was the first reasoned and cogent proposal for the construction of a strategically-sited trading post inland. Henley, it is true,

had been re-established; but policy with regard to that post had not altered. The decision to re-establish had been postponed until the peace, and the problem had been re-assessed in the light of the cession of Canada in 1763. The vulnerability of Albany to the traders who were already operating from Michilimackinac had led to a decision to 'try the Event' in 1764, and the number of men at Albany was increased to forty for that purpose. The proposal was to send in twelve men, but despite threats and entreaties Humphrey Marten could get but three to consent. Even Adam Corrigal, an exceptional labourer to whom the Committee allowed extra pay, begged to come home rather than be transferred from Moose to Albany, where he might be drafted to Henley. There was, moreover, no very obvious leader for such an enterprise; George Humble seemed 'the properest master', but although he was recommended as early as 1763 as understanding the Indian language and hunting, he was employed to go to the Eastmain as sloop-master and even five years later the Committee were writing that he would be much more useful if he could make himself conversant in the Indian language.

William Richards, surgeon at Albany, pressed for and got the appointment to Henley in 1765; he was a strong advocate of settlement and even promised to recruit the necessary servants in his native South Wales (a promise which he was unable to fulfil). In 1765, therefore, the attempt to re-found Henley was made. But Richards and his men were forced to return to Albany because there was not enough water in the rivers—a commentary on the fact that Humphrey Marten had prepared boats instead of canoes at Albany. In May 1766 the project was at last launched; Richards and his first crews made the voyage with success, to be followed by Humble and a 'second echelon' of fourteen men. The purpose of the re-established post was at this juncture most clearly laid down, for the master, Richards, differed from Humphrey Marten at Albany, and the problem was referred to London. There the Committee were most emphatic in their support of Marten. Henley was to be subordinate to Albany and it was not to be given anything like a general selection of trading goods. It was to trade on the same Standard of Trade as York, which was slightly harder for the Indians than that of Albany, and it was to be supplied only with guns, flints, powder, shot and a small supply of brandy. The post had been set up again 'solely with the design of assisting the Indians in the Course of their Journey and not with any motive to prevent the Trade being brought to Albany Fort in the usual manner'. As a transit post and no more.

Henley was confirmed in 1768 (by which time the Committee were trying to convince themselves that it was serviceable to the Upland Indians) and again in 1770, when there were fewer illusions. The Committee then sadly confessed that they had been in hopes that the establishment of Henley would have led the Indians to come down to Albany, but they accepted the interruptions to trade which persisted and, while appreciating the reasons for turning it into some sort of trading post, still insisted that trade was to be avoided there except in cases of urgent necessity, and reiterated their wish that the Indians should come down to Albany.

In all this there was something of a personal vendetta, for the Committee were upholding Humphrey Marten against Richards, who was recalled in 1769. It was to be expected that the Chief by the Bay should be somewhat jealous of the more active and younger man who was prepared to venture inland, and the natural conservatism of the Committee in adhering to a policy which was based on experience and the qualifications of their servants, and which complied with the essential arguments upon which the very existence of the Company depended, must have been reinforced by such personal bias in their advisors.

Moreover, an inland trade would be subject to peculiar temptations. Individualists themselves, the Pedlars seem to have been genuinely unable to appreciate the extent to which the Company's servants were tied by their orders—or perhaps they chose to overlook such subordination! In 1768 Isaac Batt brought down a letter from a Pedlar asking for some connivance and mutual help in trade; a similar proposal had been brought to Moses Norton at Churchill, and at Albany Humphrey Marten had received a proposal from Major Rogers himself. To all such proposals the senior servants returned the same sort of answer, in the tradition of the answers sent by the Company's first Governor Charles Bayly, by Hugh Verner, or by James Isham to proposals from the masters of the French posts. The Committee approved, and advised that in future no answer at all should be given 'as their sole Motive will be to dive into Our Affairs'. But traders inland could not be relied upon; they would be younger, poorer, and more adventurous than the Masters by the Bay. Already the Committee were beginning to wonder whether Primeau and the other 'inlanders' were not trading on their own account; they were scrutinising the amount of brandy and other trade-goods which these men were taking from the stores, the quantities of furs which they alleged they had caught themselves, and the size of the outfits with which they were equipped by the

postmasters. Any detailed check on expenditure seemed impossible, but the Committee were led, like Jacobs, to wonder whether the inland expeditions were worth while, or made any difference to the returns of trade.

But while Jacobs concluded that the remedy was to organise and co-ordinate the expeditions into a trading house, the Committee were at this time re-affirming the veto on purposeful trade at Henley, and were led in the opposite direction, to contemplate the abandonment of the expeditions. In their reply to Jacobs' proposal, sent in 1769, they commended his determination to induce the Indians to continue trade by representing to them 'the great Advantages of a constant Residence preferable to an Occasional Traffic', but they made it clear that they had not in mind a 'constant residence' inland. True, they did not turn the idea down flat. But they said they could not contemplate an establishment of anything like the size which he had proposed—of from fifteen to twenty-five men. They feared that such a post would soon equal the cost of a major factory, they expressed their fears of inland trade on general grounds, and they insisted that in any case only a limited selection of goods should be taken inland and that these should be for the giving of presents rather than for trade. They also insisted that if Jacobs did concentrate his men and set up an inland post (which would clearly be on the lines already tried at Henley rather than on those which he himself had at heart) he should use canoes, which seemed better than any kind of boats which could be thought of.

In this reply from the Committee there was a very great deal of reluctance to face the new issue. Once more, as when Joseph Isbister had undertaken the founding of Henley House, the London Committee were less enterprising than the Bay-governors. As yet, however, even Ferdinand Jacobs was incapable of making any move. He had sent his men inland again in 1768, and although he could not know their version of the situation inland until they came down to the Bay again in 1769, there was no reason to hope that his gloomy fear that they would accomplish little would prove false. In fact, from the start they found that the opposition was more purposeful both in that it had gone further upstream on the Saskatchewan and in that it was outspoken in its attitude to the Company. On his journey inland on 29th July, 1768, William Pink found that the Pedlars whom he had passed on his way down to York had gone further inland, and when he came up with them on the next day the 'Chief Person' told him that he had freedom to come and go and would come down to York itself if any attempt were made to stop him.

The instructions sent out in 1769 arrived too late for action before 1770, and in that year nothing could be done towards a concentrated effort because Jacobs could not find a leader fit to take command of the six men whom he had available. Following his instructions he had ordered three large canoes to be made, but he wrote that it would be impossible for the men to return inland that year. He was in any case averse from trying the Committee's solution of abandoning the expeditions, since he pointed out that the Indian families with whom his men sojourned derived a great deal of pride from that fact and would feel offended if they ceased suddenly.

Jacobs' trade rose a little in 1769, to over 22,000 Made-beaver; but in other respects the situation was most unpromising. The 'Inlanders' reported on their return in 1769 that the Pedlars were in different parts of the country all the way between Albany and York, and though Jacobs felt that 'they can never get so nigh Churchill as to hurt its Trade', near at hand he had news of James Finlay, a very grave threat indeed.

Finlay was an Englishman from Montreal whom the Company's servants found with twelve French servants at Nipawi, just below the Forks of the Saskatchewan; he had left another un-named Englishman with five Frenchmen under command at Basquia, and two other small outposts had also been set up. The English tried to herd the Indians past the opposition, but Finlay not only drove a good trade but challenged the validity of the Company's claims. He declared that Hillsborough's dictum of 1768 had set the trade free, and that he and the others were free to come and go as they chose in the inland country. He alleged that the Charter only gave the Company privileges within fifty leagues of the posts on the Bay, and that no number of men sent inland would hinder him from trading. Further, he let it be known that he was determined to get some Brazil tobacco for his trade; and he made a determined attempt to buy the services of the Company's servants. He offered twenty-five pounds a year, offered to pay their passage to Quebec, and gave them an address there to which to apply.

From Albany came even more ominous reports. There Humphrey Marten had to face the fact that his Indians had been stopped by force from coming down to the Bay, a matter about which he had complained in 1768 to Major Rogers at Michilimackinac. And in 1769 Thomas Hopkins added that the 'Cursed Pedlars up Country' were very numerous, that they lined every creek, used great force against the Indians, and were said to have killed several of them.

The situation as it was developing under the new system, which

had been introduced in 1768, seemed 'provoking' to Jacobs. But he did not see how on the policy adopted it could be prevented—nor the results evaded. Fort Dauphin, Lake Winnipegosis, was the nearest Pedlars' post to York Fort, and that was from fifteen to twenty days' paddling away, according to the weather. But even so the simple fact that a rival post was within that distance led to the Indians making overbearing demands. They had become 'prodigious hard to please'. Jacobs therefore turned again to the Committee with the only remedy which he could conceive, the inland trading house. His servants, he said, reported that the 'Fall Carrying Place' might be a suitable place for such a house. But he added that if the house were only to be 'to live in quietly and Encourage the Indians to come to Trade there is many Places Nearer hand to this Factory would do'. His heart was not in such a hamstrung invasion of the interior, and if such a non-trading post as the Committee wanted were to be all that was to be established he did not think it worth any great effort.

The Company, therefore, had more than enough reason to reconsider its problems in the light of the 'Rush of the English into Rupert's Land', and as the situation had developed by the fall of 1769 the major issues were clear. The Committee were prepared to be convinced that inland expeditions were beyond the resources at their disposition and should perhaps be discontinued; they were also prepared to continue and to re-organise them, but not to the extent of setting up a trading post inland. Ferdinand Jacobs shared some of their suspicion of the inland traders, but he felt convinced that well-organised posts in the interior would provide the proper answer to the Pedlars. Both the London Committee and the Bay-governors fully appreciated that nothing much could be achieved without effective leadership.

There was, of course, a possible remedy by recourse to the law. When the Proclamation of 17th October, 1763, had come to be defined and implemented in 1764, the rights of the Company had been explicitly taken into account for the first time since the conquest of Canada. The Proclamation of July 1764, which set out the details of the settlement, had ordered that the Indian trade should be thrown open, subject to licences and regulations (which Sir William Johnson had instituted) and with such limitations as not to interfere with the Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company. This meant that Rupert's Land was outside the scope of this and subsequent orders. The traders from Quebec, Montreal or Albany, going with licences to Michilimackinac, and further north or west by connivance or

evasion, would be subject to the severe penalties set out in the Company's Charter if they carried their trade into the Company's territories.

There could be no reasonable doubt that some of the Pedlars' opposition was being conducted from within the watershed of Rupert's Land. But although Jacobs wrote to London to ask for a firm instruction to 'remove those thieves off your Land' the Committee forbade him to use any violence, and seem never to have contemplated taking the issue of trespass to the law courts. The fact that the Company's Charter was still based only on Royal grant, and that since the attempt to secure a renewal of Parliamentary sanction had failed in 1697 there had always been room for doubt as to its validity, must have weighed here. For although the Parliamentary enquiry of 1749 had upheld the Company in its claims, and its rights had been safeguarded in the Proclamation of July 1764, the Charter as such had not been confirmed in Parliament, and a test case in the law courts might on the one hand bring into issue the powers of the Crown to make such grants and on the other hand might provoke renewed discussion on the extent to which the Company acted as a guardian of the national interests in these matters. In either case the result might well be adverse, and the process was certain to be expensive. The Committee must, moreover, have had it in mind that when Arthur Dobbs had consulted the Solicitor General on the validity of the grant of exclusive trade he had been told that the trade was open to any subject of the Crown. So the Committee did not take the Pedlars to the law courts, and they instructed the Bay-governors not to proceed to any violence.

A prosperous trade had something to do with this attitude, for during the whole of this period of rising opposition the Company's sales matched its market, and the quietly competent dividends came regularly to hand while the balances of invested capital increased from year to year. During the war years dividends had been dropped to eight per cent., and they stayed at that rate from 1746 to 1761 except for the two payments of 1749 and 1750, when they sank to seven per cent. In 1763 a dividend of ten per cent. was declared, and the rate stayed constant at that level until 1779. This was a trade in which there were certainly difficulties and problems, but it was not a trade in which crisis was so imminent that all should be hazarded in an expensive law suit in which everything might be lost.

Neither was it a trade which could be left to drift along in the hope that the opposition would play itself out. The vigour and the volume of the Pedlars' trade made that quite evident. The licences issued at

Michilimackinac in 1767 showed that in July and August of that year a hundred and twenty-one canoes set forth to winter among the Indians. They took goods to the value of £38,964 6s. 11*d.* But not all this trade went to areas in which it would rival the Hudson's Bay Company; in fact only fourteen canoes with goods to the value of £5,117 10s. 7*d.* were officially supposed to be gone 'by Lake Superior to the N'-West'. The rest in varying proportions were licenced for Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, by way of Lake Michigan to La Bay (the area lying west of Lake Michigan and south of Lake Superior), and by way of La Bay to the Mississippi. Even so, the pouring of such quantities of goods into the Indian territory was of the greatest importance in stimulating notions of competition, and the characters and methods of the Pedlars, especially of those who did not figure in the lists of official licences, were of even graver import.

Among the Pedlars themselves the trade was more than ordinarily competitive, and the results of such an approach to the Indian trade were soon to be seen. Both to the south (towards the Mississippi) and to the north, the Indians were plundering the canoes of the Pedlars in 1768 and 1769, and though this meant that the trade suffered from lack of goods, so that the Indians were forced down to the Bay and the trade of York rose to 34,002 Made-beaver, it meant also that the general back-ground was one of debauched Indians and suspicious traders. The suspicions between the Pedlars, and their encouragements of the Indians to trick and defraud their trade rivals, especially by defaulting on payments of debt, were widespread and continuous. With this went a courage and endurance which, admirable in itself, meant in this instance that the evil results were even more widespread.

With such a strongly individualistic urge, the Pedlars were nevertheless driven by their circumstances to operate in a constantly-changing succession of partnerships and companies. For this the reason was in part the vast territory covered by the trade. An agent in London was necessary at one end, a partner in Montreal or Quebec in the intermediate stage, and perhaps a factor at the entrepôt at Michilimackinac, before the Pedlars actually set out in their canoes—and even then they might well get great advantages from going in a team of two or three to cover a wider range of country. For the most part such arrangements would be temporary and elusive, leaving little in the way of formal correspondence or legal agreements to record their existence. The common interests and purpose, however, come to light from time to time, as when the

English traders combined to nominate Fowler Walker to represent their interests in London in 1767. Nearer to the actual trading of the furs, the partnership between Alexander Henry and the Frenchman Cadotte is typical, with an Englishman organising and financing, and to some extent hiring, to some extent sharing, the skill and knowledge of the French *voyageurs*.

Here also the list of licences issued at Michilimackinac gives valuable evidence, for it shows that although officially only one Englishman was allowed to venture into the North-west in 1767, the other five, Frenchmen, were backed and financed by Englishmen. The English, too, were forming syndicates and partnerships among themselves as well as acting as partners for the French. It was, for example, a syndicate of Forrest Oakes, James Stanley Goddard and William Grant which financed the Frenchman de la Fleur for his voyage to Michilimackinac in 1761—a transitory partnership which did not prevent Oakes from acting as security for another Frenchman, Nenard, in 1767, or from forming a partnership with Charles Boyer to go inland himself in 1768. This partnership was itself financed by Lawrence Ermatinger of Montreal, and later merged into a larger syndicate by taking in Joseph Fulton and Peter Pangman. The constant changes and re-arrangements are best taken *en bloc* as a sign of the restless energy of the men, and of their need for capital and for some sort of representative in the city. From so shifting a scene there yet emerge some durable elements and some very durable personalities.

The partnership of Todd, McGill and Frobisher was one such lasting factor. The three brothers, Joseph, Benjamin and Thomas Frobisher, natives of York in England, had long been engaged in the trade to Lake Michigan, but then turned their attention more to the north. Their partnership with the Montreal firm of Todd and McGill took shape in 1769, and the firm's first venture was plundered by Indians on its way through Rainy Lake; but in 1770 they got through to Red River and set up a trade post there. Todd and McGill were at the same time outfitting other ventures, and in particular they were responsible for sending Thomas Corry to set up Fort Bourbon on Cedar Lake in 1770.

It was Thomas Corry who was instrumental in giving the Hudson's Bay Company a realistic view of the sort of opposition which was forming against it. For in 1771 he also was on the Saskatchewan, at Cedar Lake where he was 'astride the route of the Indians from Lake Winnipegosis and Cedar River to York Factory and in the way of gathering an easy and rich harvest of furs'. But if Corry was astride

the fur route to the Bay, that made it easier for his servants to find their way down to the Bay, and two of them did so. These were the Canadian Bove and John Cole, a native of Bristol, New Jersey, who had never been to Quebec or Montreal, but who was a capable Indian trader and who deserted Corry and found his way down to York Fort in the early summer of 1772. There Andrew Graham was impressed by his capacity and knowledge and engaged him for three years, to go inland on the Company's behalf. Graham was mistaken in Cole's character, for he deserted the Company and went back again to the Pedlars' service; but he was obviously a man of more than ordinary sense, and he gave the Hudson's Bay men a description of the arrangements of the Pedlars which goes far to bring the whole thing into focus. In this, Cole's description is greatly helped by the fact that Graham himself proved an able brief-writer, conspicuous for his ability to assemble and narrate information about affairs on the Bay, and that Corry sent after his deserters a couple of letters which reveal much of the spirit and the methods of the Pedlars.

Corry's letters were in themselves examples of the naif assumption that the Hudson's Bay men would treat the Pedlars with all the courtesy of fellow-subjects, and would even protect their rights. He proclaimed that Cole and Bove were not only deserters but had taken some of his goods with them, and he asked that the Company should ship them to England for trial, for which he would repay any expenses incurred. Writing from his post at 'River de Pane' (the Saskatchewan), he showed only too clearly the state to which competition was already bringing the Indian trade, for he apologised for the defects of his ill-spelled letter by pleading that he wrote in the midst of 'Confusion with two hundred Drunken vilions about me'. They were so debauched that they had made the worst hunt for years. Corry further revealed one of the reasons for success, for he made it clear that he had won a firm hold on the loyalty of the leading Indian, Wappenasew. This was the factor which had enabled him to evade the plundering of canoes which had prevented the Pedlars from coming into the North-west in 1769-70, and the methods employed stand out clearly from Corry's letter. Wappenasew, he wrote, would not be coming down to York Fort, but in friendly manner Corry added that Graham might send a present and that the Indian intended to come down in the following spring; moreover the Indian's pipe could only be mended at the Bay (as could guns or traps, for the Pedlars took no craftsmen along). But for the moment Wappenasew was firmly tied to the Pedlar 'as he has Drunk so

much Brandy this winter he Canot Com but must Com with me to the Grand Portage to Drinke two or three Casques'. Graham added to this revelation the news that Corry had taken the Indian into his house to live with him, to eat at his table and to be on terms of freedom and equality with him—practices which would have aroused greatest suspicion in the Committee if any Hudson's Bay man had followed them.

To this the deserter Cole added the information that the opposition consisted of the 'company' of Blondeau at Montreal and Keshew his brother, of George McBeath, Isaac Todd and Thomas Corry at Michilimackinac, of John Erskine at 'Emissions' nine miles upstream from Corry, and of another Frenchman whose name Cole did not know. The goods were supplied from Quebec by Justice Walker (the same whose nose was slit and whose ears were cut off in 1765) and were sent up to Blondeau at Montreal. He sent them to Michilimackinac. Thence they went in large canoes seven fathoms long, manned by seven men each, through Lake Superior to the 'Great Carrying Place' (Grand Portage) where they took ten days to carry over and were then loaded into canoes of half the size for further transport to Rainy Lake, Woody Lake (Lake of the Woods) and so down Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg. Here they needed from twenty to forty days to get through the lake to the mouth of the 'River de Pane' (the Saskatchewan), and so to Cedar Lake, two days' journey below Basquia. There were a hundred and thirty carrying places in this route. The difficulties and hardships, and the determination and persistence needed to overcome them, were enormous. But Thomas Corry, for one example, had brought in thirty men and his guide, had built a 'decent kind of house' at Cedar Lake, and had taken his furs out to the Grand Portage leaving seven men behind to keep the Indians in good heart until another member of the partnership, John Erskine, came to build a more substantial house in the fall of 1772. Not only were the Pedlars on the spot where the Indians most needed them for trade, but they also sent their men out to tent and hunt with the Indians, thus winning both their trade and their loyalty.

It is little to be wondered at that such Pedlars should have seduced into trade a hundred and sixty canoes of Indians whom Isaac Batt and Louis Primeau were conducting down to the Bay, or that from Albany should have come the report that the Indians were forced to paddle mostly by night in order to evade the Pedlars. Even so the trade was seriously intercepted, and the Albany Indians said that the Pedlars were 'swarming' up-country, wintering with the

Indians, taking the furs as they were caught, and trading at very moderate rates. Little wonder, either, that the trade of York and Severn should have fallen off seriously, with news of fresh argosies coming to the upland areas, or that Andrew Graham should have ended his communication with a pointed comparison of personalities and methods. 'The Canadians' he wrote, 'are chosen Men inured to hardships and fatigue, under which most of your present Servants would sink. A man in the Canadian Service who cannot carry two Packs of eighty lbs. each, one and a half Leagues loses his trip (that is his Wages). But time and Practice would make it easy, and even a few Canadians may be got'.

The Company was at this time considering the possibilities of itself taking some part in this approach to the fur trade, but the precise form in which it contemplated intervention must remain something of a mystery. It is, however, clear that while it was ready to employ such Canadians as Primeau, Cole or Bove, so as to get skilled *voyageurs* at its own disposal, the Company was also thinking of embarking on actual trade from Quebec. The evidence is slight, but appears clear. In 1770 the London Committee received a letter from Joseph Isbister, written from Quebec. His proposal cannot be known, but the Committee invited him to come to London at the Company's expense, so as to discuss the proposition which he had made. Isbister died in 1771, and the answer came from his widow. So the Company lost the chance to combine the knowledge of one of its own Chief Factors and its own knowledge of shipping, buying and marketing, with the experience of a practising Pedlar. The details of the proposal which Isbister had in mind, and which the Committee were at least ready to consider, are lost; but the general nature of the problem is clear. For at this time the Committee were giving close attention to the sort of furs which the Pedlars were bringing to the London market and were writing to the Bay-governors to say that for the most part the pelts which came by way of Quebec were thicker pelts than the Bay posts produced; from their quality they seemed to come from posts 'on the back of our Settlements' and they met with such a good market in London that the Committee invited from the governors suggestions as to means for extending the Company's trade and securing such skins. Such attention to the Quebec trade in the winter of 1771-2 cannot have been divorced from the consideration of Isbister's proposals early in 1771. It is probable that Isbister was proposing, as others proposed after him, that not only could Canadians be hired to go inland from the Bay-posts, but they could also be got, with himself as an agent of the Company at

Quebec or Montreal, to traffic along the same routes as the Pedlars from Canada.

Whatever Joseph Isbister's proposals may have been, there can be no doubt of the conclusions of Andrew Graham. He had sent William Tomison inland again in 1769-70 and so had clear information of the way in which the trade was going. Tomison had gone up the Severn, through Severn Lake, Shoal River, Sturgeon Lake, Sturgeon River, Back Lake and so to Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan. There he had found the Indians gone down to Montreal with the Pedlars; further on, he found Indians who had formerly come to Albany trading with Pedlars who had settled among them, and as the winter wore on he ascertained that the Pedlars were prepared to give the Indians credit to the extent of anything from ten to forty beaver, and that their Standard of Trade was vastly more avaricious than anything attempted at the Bay. A gun was traded for twenty beaver or forty marten, a hatchet for four beaver, a knife or an ice-chisel for one; ten ball were normally traded for one beaver, though the Assinipoets got only five.

Tomison arrived at two disconcerting conclusions. The first was that 'nothing more encourages these natives to go to ware then trading Houses being Settled inland'. The other was that the system had made the Indians very indolent, delighting in nothing but gaming and smoking. Few of them ever trapped their own furs. Tomison tried to get them to go away beaver hunting, but they only answered that the winter was long and that in the spring they would see the Assinipoets and trade furs with them. The results of such a trade system, in inexpert and avaricious hands, came to light when, in the course of the winter, bands of Indians came in, starving for buffalo meat and incapable of getting any although there were plenty of beasts. They were eating their dogs because they had traded their guns to the Assinipoets for furs with which to get brandy from the Pedlars. When this trade started, the Standard at which the Pedlars traded was considerably enhanced, and the Assinipoets had to give thirty-six beaver for a good gun, twenty-five to thirty for a half-worn one. The Pedlars, it was clear, had linked on to the end of that inland-trading system which Henday had revealed, and with less scruple and more brandy than the Hudson's Bay men, they were allowing it to run away from the essential need, that the Indians should hunt furs.

For this the competition among themselves counted for at least as much as their competition against the Hudson's Bay men. Tomison brought a more depressing report than the other Englishmen who

went inland in 1769-70, for William Pink and his companions who went to the Saskatchewan found that the Pedlars had brought destruction on themselves, and that sixteen of their canoes had been despoiled by the Indians. Pink found only one Englishman, without goods, at the 'Lower house where the people of Montreal were staying' (below Basquia) as he went inland in 1769; and as he came out in the following May he found their upper house quite deserted. Nevertheless the Pedlars sent four canoes in to bring out the solitary Englishman and they promised that in the fall they would send up sixteen more, under the leadership of the experienced Franceways. So at York Ferdinand Jacobs, despite his feeling that there was something in the Committee's suspicions of the isolated inland traders, was persuaded by his leading Indians to equip James Dearing and James Allen and to send them inland, and was even reduced to repairing guns got from the Canadians and to supplying guns which he knew full well would only be traded to upland Indians and would prevent them from coming down to the Bay.

At Moose at the same time (in 1770) the Chief was protesting that his trade was falling off because of the competition of 'our Brother English' who were not four days' paddling from the post; it was impossible to determine whether the Indians had traded the Company's goods again to the 'Inland European Traders' (as the Committee only too justly suspected), but it was certain that they brought down to the Bay little but their heavier and less attractive furs. The Pedlars' settlements at Abitibi were the particular danger for Moose, and the Committee hoped to extend trade in that direction by sending men on inland voyages. But the policy was still not clear and purposeful, and when Albany proposed to send John Martin—the Indian boy 'John America Martin'—inland the Committee were, as ever, apprehensive that such a move might prevent the Indians from coming down to the factory and asked 'what Advantages may be expected from such an Undertaking'.

So, since Ferdinand Jacobs was for the moment preoccupied with other problems, as was Moses Norton at Churchill, it was Andrew Graham at Severn who took up the pointed consideration of the best means to oppose the Pedlars. He had been most disappointed by Tomison's second journey inland. Much though it had revealed, it had brought down but four canoes of Indians and something less than four hundred beaver. Yet in 1771 he reported that Tomison was in excellent health and about to set out on a third journey to the Saskatchewan and the Assinipoets, to try to wean them from their wretched indolence, and by maintaining the Company's Standard of

Trade to draw them away from the Pedlars. Graham was still convinced of the value of sending such men inland, despite the poor results and the misgivings of Jacobs. 'Two men sent yearly inland from here must be of some service' he doggedly asserted. But in 1772 Graham was in temporary command at York while Jacobs came to England, and though Christopher Atkinson was appointed from London to take over Severn, Graham knew that he was more fit for a hospital than for command of a post, a man in any case ignorant of the trade, with not even a moderate education. Tomison therefore remained to keep some sort of order at Severn and Graham contented himself with sending inland the two veterans, Isaac Batt and Louis Primeau, the only two men to go in that year.

By 1772, however, when the deserter John Cole came down to him and gave him his description of the Pedlars' trade, when the Committee were wondering how to get at the skins which were being obtained through Quebec, and when the Bay-governors were being prepared for an invasion of their own territories by instructions that they should use their utmost endeavours to convince the Pedlars of their improper conduct and should require their departure, Andrew Graham began to plan offensively instead of defensively. He argued that the thick-pelted beaver which the Pedlars traded was got by the Blackfeet and was by them traded to the Saskatchewan and the Assinipoets—so much was certain, and Tomison had confirmed the trade-route. These furs, he now said in answer to the Committee's enquiry, could only be got down to the Bay if the Company made 'settlements' far inland. He sent presents inland, in the hope that he might re-win the affection of the Indians, and especially of Wappenassew, on whom the Pedlars had depended so much to overcome the plundering of their brigades of canoes. But he was convinced that the great need was for tobacco and brandy in the inland trade, and that the Company had great advantages in an easier route to the interior, in its virtual monopoly of Brazil tobacco, and in its comparatively moderate Standard of Trade. He hoped much 'if Erskine's New England Rum do not prevail'—John Erskine was the partner who was to take over Corry's post at Cedar Lake while the latter went down to Montreal and perhaps even to England.

This, however, was but a stop-gap approach, and in 1772 Graham was emphatic that, as John Cole and Louis Primeau had told him, 'nothing will do but the making of a Settlement Inland'. He had always been susceptible to the renegade servants of the Canadians, and it is difficult to tell how far in this matter he was influenced by

his years of experience, and how far by the views of these two men who had grown up in an alien tradition of the fur trade. Certainly, in advocating settlement inland, Graham was completely abandoning the views which he had previously held. For he had hitherto brought his considerable powers of presenting a well-reasoned case to support the view that nothing should be attempted beyond the sending inland of envoys who should bring the Indians down to trade. Settlements within five hundred miles of the coast, he had said, would merely detract from the trade at the coast in the same way as Henley had proved a detriment to the trade of Albany; and the 'shoalness' of the rivers would make it extremely difficult to get goods and provisions as far inland as five hundred miles within the season. Finally, he had been convinced that the Pedlars would over-reach themselves and that the Company had but to persist in its policy for the opposition to collapse. But Graham's memorandum of 1772 marks a complete change from these convictions.

In this Graham was merely marking his own conversion, and saying again what Jacobs had said in 1769. But he brought to the matter a remarkably orderly mind and a persuasive pen, and he had with him in this matter Edward Umfreville, a recently engaged clerk, sent to York as a writer and thence transferred to Severn, where Graham reported him as 'A pretty Accountant and does very well at Severn'. Umfreville and Graham between them showed great powers of logistic persuasion and soon drew up an admirable *pro forma* of the requirements of a settlement such as they had in mind. But first, in 1772, they emphasised the basic requirements—fourteen men, a young lively master, and at least two canoes.

The two canoes were ordered from Indians, who were to bring them down to Severn the following year. For master of the expedition Graham suggested either Samuel Hearne or Thomas Hutchins, both well qualified and standing high in the esteem of the Committee; and to get a better and more balanced idea of the state of affairs into which he hoped the expedition would be projected, he sent Matthew Cocking inland in 1772.

In saying that he would send Matthew Cocking inland in 1772, Graham explained that 'I have often reflected that the Accounts given us by Men sent Inland were incoherent and unintelligible, I thought therefore that a sensible Person might Answer the Purpose much better, and make many observations which may be of Utility, and mentioning my sentiments to Mr. Cocking, he readily offered himself for any Service to promote Your Interest'. It was a rational account of the situation inland, if possible with exact observations of

latitude and longitude, which Graham felt that the Company needed; and he had chosen his man well. With an adequate education, able to write well and to think clearly, Cocking had been 'entertained' as a writer at York Fort in 1765; later he had been made Second at York, and as such he would have a fair share of responsibility and the doubtful privilege of being one of the few men who actually dealt with the Indians at trading time. Cocking therefore had behind him some seven years' knowledge of the trade and of the personalities of the Indians when Graham sent him inland in the autumn of 1772.

The 'Journal of a Journey Inland with the Natives by Matthew Cocking, Second at York Fort; commencing Saturday 27th June, 1772, and ending Friday 18th June 1773' is indeed one of the better written among the Company's documents. It stands out in sharp contrast with the illiterate and cryptic accounts of Joseph Smith, William Pink, and the few who could write at all among those whom the Company sent inland in these years. But it was his human observations rather than any ability to make correct geographical 'observations' which gave Cocking's account its value. For he found it difficult to use a compass, naively remarking that the canoe had such a motion in paddling that the needle was never still. The small box compasses which he took with him were, in any case, soon broken, he found it difficult if not impossible to use an artificial horizon to make an observation, and he acknowledged that the errors in his log were to be imputed to the want of proper instruments and to his having but little skill in navigation.

Travelling by way of Knee Lake, Cross Lake, the Minago River and Moose Lake, Cocking reached the Saskatchewan at the Pas; thence he went through Saskeram Lake to the Forks of the Saskatchewan, and so overland to the Elbow, the Eagle Hills and the Plains to the south-west. Here he met the Gros Ventres, equestrians, whom he wanted to persuade to come down to trade at the Bay. But he got much the same reply as Henday had got from the Blackfeet—the equestrian tribes could not manage canoes, they had no need to make so long a journey since they could easily trade furs for their necessities with the Assiniboines and other middlemen, and they feared starvation, or a fish diet, on the journey.

In such a journey Cocking saw much of the Pedlars, and of the Indians' reaction to the opportunities which competition between the white men had brought to their door. They refused to accept the notion that the Company sent its servants inland merely in order to persuade the Indians to come down to the Bay, for this

fundamental basis of the Company's policy proved too subtle for the Indians. The unmistakable fact that it was the Pedlars' purpose to trade, seconded by their knowledge that the men whom the Company had sent inland certainly did trade, led the Indians to insist that any Englishman sent among them must be sent in order to collect furs. They refused to accept him merely as 'an encouragement to them to trap furs and come down to the Settlements'. In this, of course, the Indians were arguing quite logically from the underlying assumption that if the rival white men wanted their furs they would have to come and get them at the Indians' convenience; those were the terms of a competitive trade, and it seemed unrealistic to try to emphasise personal and exotic factors (such as gifts of laced hats, titles of 'Captain', ties of friendship, or even a craving for Brazil tobacco) to the extent of expecting them to pass habitually by a trade brought to their doors and to make so long and arduous a journey to an alternative market. The problem was accepted in this form by the Indians, and the answer was clear to Cocking as soon as he had realised their line of thought. Moreover, he discovered to his surprise that personal ties were at least as likely to make the Indians trade inland as to draw them to the Bay. The Pedlars had great ability in handling the Indians, and though familiarity at times proved dangerous it was a welcome contrast to the exclusion from the posts with which the Company greeted them after their long journey.

Cocking's Journal has been known to the public through a printed copy of a version which occurs in a book of 'Observations on Hudson's Bay' kept by Andrew Graham. But Graham's version differs in many important respects from the original kept by Cocking. The reasons for the changes are not apparent, but the changes are quite obvious. Not least is the change in the reports on the Pedlars, whose numbers, wealth in canoes, and influence appear differently. The printed version, for example, carries the oft-quoted note that Cocking was surprised to see 'What a warm side the Natives hath to the French Canadians'. So far is Cocking from making such a remark that on the very day to which this 'surprise' is ascribed—26th May, 1773—he notes that the Indians have plundered one of the Pedlars, openly taking his trading goods, 'which through fear was connived at'. But he certainly realised the Pedlars' abilities and influence, and he noted with alarm that Corry had managed to get some Brazil tobacco inland, and despite the distance and the cost of transportation, had traded it at the same rate as the Company used at the Bay-side.

From the facts as he saw them Cocking came to the firm conclusion that the Indians would only trade to the Bay for such goods as the Pedlars could not supply inland. He interjected in his narrative the conclusion that an inland settlement was the only way to save the trade at York, and he concluded with a well-reasoned appendix of 'Thoughts on making a Settlement Inland'. Here the desire of the Indians was given pride of place; even if they could be persuaded to go down to the Bay, they would still want a post at hand where they could get ammunition to leave with their families, and so that they could hunt for food on the journey. The present system, Cocking was convinced, would not answer; it merely served to screen the inlanders from duty at the forts, and he was certain that they traded extensively on their own account, abused Indians on occasion, and built up quite a substantial volume of ill-feeling against the Company. His Journal is marked with the deepest suspicion of Louis Primeau, who was reported by the Indians as wandering around in clothing got from the Pedlars, and who was alleged to have with him over a hundred beaver which he had got from Indians by trading the goods which he had brought inland. The alternative to this unsatisfactory state of affairs was, said Cocking, to build a house at, or even above the Pas (Basquia as he always calls it). Canoes would have to be used, for even after an analysis of alternate routes he concluded that boats would be too heavy on the portages.

The choice of a site seemed to Cocking to be dictated by the facts of the situation. He accepted and emphasised the difficulties and the length of time which the Pedlars faced in bringing their goods inland, and he pointed out that the Pedlar who could out-distance his rivals and get further up-river managed to trade at a higher standard. On the whole, Basquia represented the maximum distance which the Pedlars could reach in a year's voyage. The Company, on the other hand, had at its disposal a route which was much shorter and easier. He himself, though hampered by the 'country sickness' among his Indians, had taken only forty-five days to reach the Birch Hills, the end of his river-journey, where he 'threw away' his canoe. In normal times, with a fit crew, this could be accomplished in about twenty days. With this great advantage, he argued, the Company should be able to keep its post always a little further inland than the Pedlars could thrust their trade in one year. This, he thought, could well be managed without any serious change in administration. For unlike his Chief, Andrew Graham, Cocking thought the Canadians would prove most unprofitable servants for this task. They were not even

faithful to their present Pedlar masters. The Company's ordinary servants, on the other hand, could in Cocking's opinion manage the journey extremely well 'if Healthful and Able', with the assistance of a native or so in the canoe until the European had learned to manage the craft.

This most pertinent analysis of the problem was supported by Cocking's reports on the Pedlars and their methods of trade. He was told that the Pedlars who had intercepted a great part of the trade of York Fort were at a lake one day's paddle below him, not at 'Basquia'; that is to say, that Thomas Corry was trading, 1772-3, at Cedar Lake. On 8th August he passed an old Pedlar's house where Franceways had resided four years ago, in 1768-9; next day he saw a further Pedlar's house where formerly Franceways and later Finlay had resided. During the winter he heard a succession of Indian rumours about the number and the position of the Pedlars who had come inland that year, and in the end he found Franceways at Nipawi (the 'middle' French house where Finlay had traded) with five canoes of goods and three more canoes at a shallow lake upstream of Basquia; downstream were four more, belonging to Pedlars who were in partnership with him. There were four more canoes in the track of the Indians who came up from the south to trade at York Fort, and several others in places all the way down to the principal settlement of the Pedlars at the Grand Carrying Place. Such a mounting volume of competition, and the way in which it was dispersed as far up the Saskatchewan as the single year's journey would carry the Pedlars (which was to about Basquia or Nipawi) was the discouraging feature of Cocking's report.

But Cocking was not only able to note the number and strength of the Pedlars' posts, he was also able to watch their actual trade and to report on their methods and success—and on their failures and weakness too. Their Standard of Trade was one of the most important things which the Committee required to know, and Cocking was able to report that Corry had traded at the rate of a three-and-a-half-foot gun for eight beaver, a four-foot gun for ten and a three-foot gun for six, as against which the Company's Standard stood at ten beaver for the three-foot gun at Albany and Moose, and fourteen beaver at York and Churchill. Corry's guns were of a reputable English make, by Messrs. Wilson, whom the Company also employed, and there was little wonder that the Indians were loud in their praise of Corry's generosity, especially as he gave away small items, such as vermilion and awls, gratis.

The Standard followed by Franceways was not so generous. The

Indians were annoyed with him and said that he traded a great deal harder than formerly, whereas of Corry, still at Cedar Lake, they gave an account 'which is not to be believed'. In fact Franceways' Standard as reported by Cocking does not seem exorbitant in the main items. A three-and-a-half foot gun was traded by him for twelve beaver (as against Corry's eight), and a three-foot gun for ten—which was the same as the Company's Standard at Albany and Moose, and better than that used at York and Churchill. Smaller goods, hatchets for four beaver, a badly-made looking glass for one beaver, Franceways traded dearer; and when his Standard is compared with that reported for the Pedlars by Tomison, that which Cocking reported for Corry, and that adopted by the Company in the posts concerned, it becomes clear that the real danger to the Company was that the Pedlars were infinitely more flexible. They could trade according to moods and circumstances. Gifts played a great part in their trade, brandy was 'above all persuasion' with the Indians, and the rigidity of the Company's Standard, even when softened by the 'overplus' convention and gifts, was a great handicap.

A further insight into the problems of the Pedlars was given by Cocking when he reported that at Basquia itself he found a single Pedlar 'laying in a Tent with four of his Men and two more belonging to the old Pedlar above'. This man was William Bruce, an independent trader with no partners, making his first trade on the Saskatchewan. He had formerly traded 'among the Indians at Mississippi', but had killed an Indian there and had moved up north. He told Cocking a good deal about the Pedlars and their arrangements; and he also told him that he had written to the Governor at York (the letter has not survived) offering his services to the Hudson's Bay Company. His proposal was that in the following year he should bring up eight canoes of goods from Grand Portage. At the end of his winter's trade he would send two of them, laden with furs, back to the Portage to pay his debt there and would take the other six down to York for shipment to England. His terms were that he would want half of the produce of the furs when sold in England. Cocking thought this monstrous; but considering that the basis of the proposal was that the Company should act as his shipping and marketing agent and be rewarded by fifty per cent. of the selling price, it does not now seem so outrageous a proposal in itself. Cocking, however, was well-conditioned by his service in the Company. He thought along lines in which anything in the nature of private trade within the Company was anathema, and anything like the Company acting as the factor for the private fur-trader

unthinkable, whatever the terms. In any case, he was not impressed with Bruce, whom he judged a shallow fellow, of no great depth. He put him, in the hierarchy of the Pedlars and their partnerships, as about on the same level as Franceways although he traded on his own, not in the same class as the illiterate but wealthy Corry.

Both Corry and Franceways made a good trade. But Cocking thought that they could easily be opposed by the Company. The Indians told him that they often plundered the Pedlars. The Leader with whom he was travelling recounted how even Finlay had been plundered when he was at Nipawi, and only the intervention of the Leader himself had saved the Pedlar's life. Corry, too, had been pressed for gifts of brandy when he arrived, and though he pretended he had none (so that he might save it to entice them in to his post in the spring), they threatened his life until he 'remembered' where he had put some aside, dug up three kegs from their hiding-place and distributed some forty-five gallons of spirit. With Franceways they were offended because of his Standard of Trade, and they were constantly telling Cocking that they would molest and plunder the Frenchman despite the ease and familiarity which he allowed, his undoubted experience and mastery of some sides of their character, and the presence of his Indian 'wife'. Cocking found this Pedlar, with whom he ate a couple of meals, an ignorant old Frenchman who did not make his men keep their proper distance. But he allowed that Franceways knew the Indian trade; he said he had thirty years' experience of it, and he was not exaggerating. Even so, it was clear that his hold on the natives was not one of affection but of interest, and in the matter of interest Cocking held that the Company could offer as good value as any Pedlar.

Cocking got back to York Fort in June 1773, and his Journal, log of distances travelled, and 'Thoughts on making a Settlement Inland', were brought home to London by the ship of that year, to be worked over by the Committee during that winter. He was convinced that he could do nothing further by himself inland—a completely different approach and an organised expedition to make a settlement were needed—and he settled down to await further orders at York Fort.

Cocking's Journal has hitherto been treated, in the main, as merely one of the great stories of travel into the uplands of Canada, well written and given point by the fact that it carried a Log of data which enable his route to be quite accurately determined. But it was far more than that. It was the final and inescapable argument, based on experience, for the necessity to found an inland trading settlement.

As such, it must be confessed, the Journal came too late. It is valuable as showing later generations the basic facts of the situation rather than as one of the considerations which influenced a decision. For while Cocking did not get back to York until June 1773, and his Journal could not be in the Committee's hands until the ships reached the Thames in November of that year, the Committee had already come to a decision in May. Much of Cocking's evidence and conclusions had, of course, been anticipated piecemeal by the reports of Pink, Tomison and others, and Andrew Graham and Ferdinand Jacobs had already advocated the same course of action and had even got some sort of reluctant assent from the Committee. Working on this the Committee had, in May of 1773, instructed Jacobs (again in command at York Fort) that, in view of the decline in trade and the way in which the Pedlars intercepted the Indians, they had decided to establish a trading house inland as far up as the Pas, or thereabouts according as might be judged most suitable.

In reaching this momentous decision, the Committee were implementing the suggestion which Andrew Graham had made, largely on the basis of the evidence given by the Pedlar deserter John Cole, in 1772. Cocking was still inland; the Committee hoped to receive 'some material advantages' from his news, but the plan in hand was that of Graham, for which the journey by Cocking was, in its way, a reconnaissance. Whereas Graham, on Cole's advice, had said that fourteen men were needed, the Committee now ordered out an extra seventeen, to be recruited in the Orkneys, an assortment of extra trading goods was sent out, and the Instructions penned on 12th May, 1773, were quite explicit.

The choice of the site at the Pas was based on the view, derived from Graham and Jacobs, that it was 'commodiously situated'. It was assumed that Louis Primeau, Isaac Batt, and the two deserters Cole and Bove, together with James Allen from York, would in any case be sent inland, and that Cocking would repeat his journey too. Further, the Committee took heart from Graham's statement that he had ordered two of the large Canadian canoes of which his inlanders had given him reports. The cargo capacity, together with the lightness of these craft, made them seem as ideal for the Company to get its goods inland as they were for the Pedlars to get their goods up the long route which they were condemned to use. But they were craft which had never yet come down to the Bay, different altogether from the small two-man canoes in which the Indians made their journeys to the posts. The large canoe used by the Pedlars was still so much a matter of hearsay that Cocking had thought it worth-while to note

that the canoes used by Franceways were twenty-four feet long and drew twenty-two inches of water—and there were no materials with which imitations could be made at the posts by the Bay. For at York and Churchill timber of any kind was scarce and the birch and cedar, or even pine, needed for canoes were unobtainable; they did not grow so far north. So the Committee hoped that the two canoes already ordered from the upland Indians had arrived in readiness for the projected expedition, and that it would be possible to get more craft prepared for the spring of 1774, so that a regular service for transporting goods inland could be undertaken.

One point on which the Instructions seem to have been remiss, and on which experience at Henley might have taught the Company a lesson, was the provision of food both for the journey inland and for the post when established. This was a matter which had occupied a good deal of the attention of both Cocking and Graham, for it was clear to both that it would enormously increase the cost of the establishment if English provisions had to be brought inland, or if the easily-killed geese and partridges whereby the Bay-side posts supplemented their English food had to be transported. The ultimate answer was to depend on pemmican and the gun for the journey inland, and on fishing and Indian hunters, with a reserve of English provisions as a last resort in a bad season, for the winter at the post. These considerations had been put forward for consideration, but as yet the provisioning of the post was a matter in which the London Committee left the local men to make their own arrangements. They did, however, go so far as to take up the suggestion by Graham that such an exploit could not be left as the sole responsibility of the men at York. The master at Churchill, he wrote, must also 'push it up with a willingness'. And now the Committee ordered that Moses Norton at Churchill must supply anything required for the expedition.

Vague as the Instructions of 1773 may have been on the subject of provisions, they were quite explicit on the final point of the whole thing. Having made a log hut near the Pas, the expedition was then to trade any furs which the Indians brought in, with a preference for prime furs. This was the vital decision, the change in policy which marked the acceptance of the verdict of Cocking, Tomison and the other inlanders, of Jacobs and Graham and Humphrey Marten. The trade was to be carried inland, and the rivalry with the Pedlars was to be taken to the Forks of the Saskatchewan. There the English were to live side-by-side with the Pedlars, cautious of any correspondence with them and ready to act firmly but with discretion in

any case of dispute. They were no longer merely to try to prevent the Indians from trade with the Pedlars, and to persuade them to voyage to the Bay. Unlike Henley or any other previous venture by Hudson's Bay men, this expedition was to trade.

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CHAPTER II

SAMUEL HEARNE: THE COPPERMINE AND CUMBERLAND HOUSE

In command of this vital, policy-making, expedition was to be Samuel Hearne. The Committee expected that Matthew Cocking would already have been sent inland, and that Hearne would meet him there, along with Batt and the other inlanders. Hearne would derive much benefit from the knowledge and experience which Cocking had acquired; but Hearne was the man on whom the Committee had lighted to answer the prime condition for Graham's suggestion of 1772 that the attempt to establish a trading post inland needed a young and lively master.

The choice of Hearne rather than of Cocking may seem a little odd, for Cocking had proved himself able to travel the route envisaged, and he was an experienced trader. Later in his career he suffered from 'an ugly rupture' and found inland service beyond him; but as yet the Committee could know nothing of this. Probably their choice was dictated by close adherence to the memorandum which Graham had sent home in 1772, and which they followed wherever possible. Graham had then suggested that the lively young master should be either Samuel Hearne or the surgeon Thomas Hutchins; he had not yet hit on the notion of sending Cocking inland, and the latter was quietly and efficiently helping with the accounts and the trade at York.

Of the two men whom they had under consideration the Committee could hardly help choosing Hearne, for he had already rendered signal service and shown great qualities as a traveller. Born in 1745, and early left an orphan by the death of his father, Hearne had served in the Royal Navy from the age of eleven. But finding himself still a midshipman without prospects at the end of the Seven Years' War, he had taken employment with the Hudson's Bay Company who sent him, in 1766, to Churchill. There he was 'entertained' as Mate on one of the sloops for three years at £25 a year.

While York, Severn, Albany and the Eastmain, were mainly occupied during the post-war years in assessing and resisting the invasions of the Pedlars, Churchill had two major tasks in hand, the establishment of a black-whale fishery and the prosecution of ex-

ploration to the northward. Over both projects the half-breed Moses Norton presided with persistence and purpose. It is from Hearne that the outlines of Norton's character must be accepted, and Hearne obviously laboured under a strong personal dislike for this English-educated son of the former Governor of Churchill. To an 'uncommon propensity to the fair sex', Hearne said that Norton added a firm determination to prevent any other European from having any intercourse with the Indian women, and he ended by painting a caricature of a lecherous old man, using influence, position, and even poison, to establish himself as a hypocritical old 'debauchee, who wished to engross every woman in the country to himself'. Certainly Norton's letters to the Governor and Committee annually contained sycophantic emphasis on the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice which the other Bay-governors found unnecessary; certainly too his private life did not accord with this annual tribute to the morals of the Londoners. But whether he was such a gross and dangerous hypocrite as Hearne painted must be open to question, for Moses Norton was a man of uncommon energy and perception, the London Committee had seen him in person, and they kept him in command at Churchill continuously from 1762 to his death in 1773. True, towards the end they expressed the hope that he would conduct his trade 'in the best manner so as not to give the Indians any disgust', but although they obviously felt that all was not above suspicion at Churchill they can have had no reason to envisage anything like the ludicrous and bitter bacchanalia which Hearne described.

Norton's particular obsession was the same as had beset his father. He had a firm conviction of the possibility of exploiting the rumoured copper-mine of the far north, and when some fine specimens of the ore had been brought to Churchill in 1768 he had gone forthwith to London to put the case for renewed exploration.

Behind him at that time was the long story of the Company's efforts to find the copper-mine and the North-west Passage, dating back to Governor Knight and his own father, Richard Norton. His own efforts in that direction had been notable, and the London Committee had been constant in support. Norton had himself taken part in the expedition of 1761, when the sloop *Churchill* was sent north, with orders that Norton was to execute discovery in the long-boat when the sloop was held up. Captain Christopher had then sailed the *Churchill* a hundred miles up Bowden's (or Chesterfield) Inlet, the 'Streights or River called by the Natives Kis-catch-ewen'; the Committee expected a full discovery in 1762, and although by 1764 they were convinced that Bowden's Inlet, fully explored in

1762, 1763 and 1764, showed no promise of being either a benefit to the nation or an extension of the trade of the Company, yet they commended Moses Norton's diligence and gave him the considerable gratuity of forty pounds. Next year the orders for the sloop to go trading were renewed, and the Committee promised to divide one-eighth of the trading profits between the Chief Factor, the sloop-master and the sailors. At the same time a new sloop, the *Severn*, was sent out to York Fort and the old sloop, the *Success*, was ordered up to Churchill. But this was more in aid of the whaling project than of exploration. For by 1764 Norton had written that he would send the sloop only as far north as Marble Island for trade and whales, since he had made diligent enquiries among the Indians and was 'Certain and Shure that there is no Passage into the Western Ocean in this Hudson's Bay'.

The whaling project was to continue until 1772, by which time the Committee had provided the brigantine *Charlotte* for the purpose and had employed a couple of expensive and unproductive harpooners. But the black whales proved elusive, and by the time the project was closed down the Company estimated that it had lost over £20,000 on it.

While the costly experiment dragged to a conclusion Moses Norton devoted most of his attention to the northern trade from Churchill. Apart from the notion of a copper-mine, which he could never quite get out of his mind, and the notion of a North-west Passage, which was for the moment out of court since he had himself explored Bowden's Inlet, he felt that there were two main problems before him as Chief at Churchill. Trade could be increased either by getting quantities of furs from the Eskimos of the coast and islands, or from the 'Far Indians' to the north and west.

For the Eskimos Norton embarked on the traditional policy of the Company. Sending his sloops annually up the coast, he instructed the captains to trade fairly, to win over leading men by presents and gifts of clothing (which did not always prove acceptable) and above all to make peace between the Eskimos and the Indians. He flattered himself that he had gone far towards this pacification, and he also got one Eskimo to entrust his two sons to be brought up at the Fort. Hearne as mate on the sloop was employed on this trade among the Eskimos, and he was sure that they had got so used to European contacts that not only would they drink a draught of porter or of brandy and water, but an Englishman could safely go and live among them if only he could get used to their arduous life and to their disgusting food.

For the 'Far Indians' Norton was more sceptical. In 1766 three Dogrib Indians came in to trade at Churchill. They were the first of the tribe whom Norton had seen, and they had never seen a post before. But although their tribe had not been so accurately ascertained, Indians from the far north-west, from the area where (as we now know) the Coppermine runs down to the Arctic, had come in to Churchill from time to time ever since its establishment and had stirred the Chiefs there, including Moses Norton's father, with visions both of copper and of an enlarged trade. Hitherto the attempts to approach both the copper and the 'Far Indian' trade had been by sea, or at best by way of the coast. Norton had the notion to set forth an overland expedition. But he realised that an overland approach would have inherent difficulties as a trade-route. The 'Far Indians', he wrote, have but little knowledge of guns, so they would starve on the long journey to Churchill. Under the present system the 'Northern Indians' (the Chipewyans) acted as middlemen. They supplied the 'Far Indians' with all that they needed in the way of European goods and so made it doubtful, especially in view of the difficulties of the journey, whether the distant tribes could be persuaded to bring their own furs to trade. If direct contact could be established with the 'Far Indians' there was a chance that new incentives would be released and that greater desire for English goods would result in more assiduous hunting and greater fur-returns. But the handsome profits which his Northern Indians made out of their middleman role made Norton suspicious. They got nine or ten beaver for a hatchet, four for a knife, and so in proportion, a handsome rate which, said Norton, 'makes me to be of opinion that the Northern Indians will rather be a Hinderance to their coming to the Fort than otherwise in order to keep that Monopoly in their Power as much as they can'. There was in the northern trade a system similar to that in the southern trade, whereby the furs were brought to the posts by natives who had traded them rather than by those who had caught them; and whereas in the south the Company had tried since Kelsey's time to draw down the actual trappers and was now being forced to contemplate breaking this system and setting up an inland trading post because of the need to counteract the Pedlars' interception of the trade, in the north the problem was still at the stage where the answer seemed to be to make peace and to draw down the 'Far Indians' to the posts.

The trend of Moses Norton's thoughts in the direction of northern trade was affected by two events. In London in 1768 Alexander Cluny, writing as the 'American Traveller', set the

Company by the ears by describing the large lumps of virgin copper which he alleged he had himself picked up, and by publishing a highly 'visionary' map of the Bay showing a passage from the Pacific to the Bay. The old enthusiasms and suspicions of the Dobbs era were roused again, with a desire to exploit so valuable an asset as Cluny made the rumoured copper-mine appear. Cluny's assertions were pure imagination, but they must have affected the Committee. Still more were they affected when in 1768 Moses Norton himself came to London to persuade them in the same direction. Two of his Chipewyan leaders (one of them the famous Matonabee) who had been absent exploring the rivers of the north for five years had just come back to Churchill. They reported that they had found a river which ran between the copper-mines, in a wooded country full of fine fur-bearing and provision-supplying animals. They brought with them a piece of ore and a plan of the country, and they explained that the river lay 'far to the northward where the sun don't set I take it to be in Baffin's Bay'.

Between Alexander Cluny and his *American Traveller* and Moses Norton and his piece of ore, mindful of the persistence of the reports on this subject, the Committee sent out Instructions by the ship of 1769 which set Hearne off on his career of exploration and put an end for ever to the mystery of the Coppermine, and of a practicable passage to the Pacific from Hudson Bay. They told John Fowler, temporary Chief at Churchill, that Norton (who was returning to take up command by the same ship) had convinced them that their trade could be improved by trading as far north as 70°, and that some Indians from that area had promised to come again to the fort provided an inland journey was undertaken by some experienced person. They suggested that about six Northern Indians, two of the best Home Guards and two or three European servants, should make up the party and that Samuel Hearne should be in command 'especially as it is represented to us to have been his particular Inclination'. They sent out a box of mathematical instruments for his use, and to Hearne they wrote hoping that he would undertake the journey (which they thought would take about sixteen months), promising him his position as mate of the *Churchill* for as long as he should remain at the post, raising his wages to thirty pounds a year, and holding out hopes that on his return he would be made Master of the brigantine *Charlotte*.

Assuming that he would go on the journey, the Committee told him to take possession of any lands in which advantages to the trade seemed likely, to trace a navigation and to leave land-fall marks on

the shore for the sloop, so that any ores discovered might be got away by sea, and to make a detailed report of the journey. He was to take ammunition for hunting on the journey, and some goods for presents. But he was not to engage in trade, and he was to realise that it was very doubtful whether a post would ever be established in the far north since the Committee thought such a post would lessen the trade at Churchill and merely save the Indians the trouble of a journey. The Committee were approaching the problem of extending trade to the northward in exactly the same way as they had adopted for the south, with a propaganda tour designed to bring the Far Indians down to trade, but with no intention of setting up a trading post so far from navigable waters.

The Instructions given to Hearne by Moses Norton tallied closely with those emanating from the London Committee, though they were naturally more specific in some matters such as naming the Englishmen and the Indians who were to accompany him, and less specific in others, such as the order that after the initial voyage there should be no further development until 1772, by which time the Committee would have had time to assess the achievement and the possibilities. Norton's Instructions, too, were more specific than Hearne liked, setting out his conduct if by any unforeseen accident or disaster he should be prevented from reaching the Coppermine. He was then to try 'to know the event of Wager Strait', to see how near the woods were to navigable water and whether a settlement could be made there with any advantage. Failing Wager Strait, he was to try Baker Lake at the head of Bowden's Inlet, or any other river; in addition he was to try to find out whether there was a Passage. All of which, Hearne thought, might have been omitted with great propriety.

Hearne, diligent and trustworthy but not an assertive character, seems to have had no hesitation in accepting the assignment, and he set off on foot from Churchill in November 1769. He had with him two white servants, a small party of Home Guards, and he was prepared for a journey of up to two years, equipped only with his surveying instruments (including some blank maps on which he could plot his course and fill in the details), ammunition, some iron-work, tobacco, a few knives, and 'only the shirt and clothes I then had on, one spare coat, a pair of drawers, and as much cloth as would make me two or three pair of Indian stockings, which, together with a blanket for bedding, composed the whole of my stock of clothing'. It was, however, an ill-fated journey. One of the Northern Indians deserted on the first night and Hearne was himself compelled to take

over the man's sledge with its sixty-pound load. The going was rough, and although the Indians set the course in a north-westerly direction it soon became clear that they did not know the country and had not their hearts in the journey. At the end of the month they deserted *en masse* under their Captain, well provided with the English provisions which they had embezzled under Hearne's nose and leaving him, the Home Guards and the two Englishmen, short of food, some two hundred miles from Churchill. Favoured by serene weather, Hearne and his men hunted their way back to Churchill, to arrive on 11th December, 1769, 'to my own great mortification, and to the no small surprise of the Governor, who had placed great confidence in the abilities of Chawchinahaw', the Indian Captain.

It was towards the end of February 1770, before Hearne was able to set forth again. This time he was accompanied by only two of the Home Guards and by three Northern Indians. He had himself decided never again to take English labourers since the Indians treated them with so little attention, especially when food was scarce; and Moses Norton, true to the picture which Hearne drew of him, had decreed that no Indian women must be included, though he well knew the vital part which the women must play on such a journey.

Hearne's second journey towards 'the famous river I was engaged to go in quest of' was, despite these precautions and the experience he had acquired, as disappointing as his first. Hampered by snow and bad weather, he had got only a moderate distance by mid-March when scarcity of game threw the party back on to fishing, and they settled down by a reasonable fishing lake to await easier travelling conditions in May. Towards the end of April, after a good deal of privation when the fishery failed, Hearne and his party joined up with the women-folk of the Northern Indians who had gone down to Churchill to take part in the goose-hunt, and they all moved back towards Seal River. From 13th to 23rd May they stayed there, and when they moved off to the north-west again they were recruited not only by the plentiful supply of geese and swans, but also by six Indian wives whom Hearne added to his party to act as porters.

Working northwards in fine weather and with plenty of game, the party found the snow too soft for snow-shoes on 6th June, and abandoned its sledges on 10th. Hearne now found himself trudging in really hot weather under a sixty-pound load which contained his quadrant and its stand, and was awkward as well as heavy. Short of food, short of firewood (and averse from raw fish), without a tent on the barren ground (for his northern guide had neglected to warn

him to bring poles into that treeless area, though he had provided for himself) Hearne found this walking the most laborious work he had ever encountered. Despite all, he reached the Kazan River (which he called the Cathawchachaga) where he met a party of Northern Indians engaged in spearing deer as they crossed the river, and he sent a message back to Churchill by the Captain Keelshies, who was going there to trade. Before leaving the Kazan, where he stayed a few days in hopes of stocking up with deer meat, Hearne provided himself with a canoe and with an Indian to carry it and so proceeded northwards, stopping to make pounded meat when he fell in with a herd of musk-oxen. But by the end of July his guide had persuaded him that he could not possibly arrive at the mouth of the Coppermine River that summer, and that therefore he would do better to spend the winter in company with some of the hunting Indians whom they encountered. So Hearne found himself wandering to and fro, with a band of about six hundred Indians.

Deer were plentiful and all went smoothly, but on 12th August, when he was just regaining his spirits after the desertion of the Indian who was carrying the quadrant, and recovering from the gloomy reflection that he was utterly dependent on Indians who seemed to have no sense of his troubles, Hearne broke his quadrant, smashed and useless when a gust of wind blew it over, and he resolved thereupon to return to Churchill. Next day he was joined by a band of Indians who plundered him of most of his goods, including his gun. Vital as this was, as he well knew, Hearne merely recorded that it was not in his power to recover the gun and 'we were obliged to rest contented'. He showed a strange capacity for stifling resentment at such outrageous treatment, and even noted that since the ravagers had so lightened his load, this was the easiest and most pleasant part of the journey since he had left the fort.

Poverty-stricken as he was, Hearne was neglected by the bands of Indians with whom he journeyed towards Churchill, neglected even by his own guide, until on 20th September he fell in with the Indian leader Matonabee. This was one of the Chipewyan Indians who had brought the news of the copper-mine to Churchill in 1767, and Hearne was specially instructed to make contact with him; Matonabee also was on his way to Churchill to trade, and he now proved most helpful in securing snow-shoes, warm clothing and food. Delighted to hear that Hearne would embark on a third voyage for the discovery of the copper-mine, he volunteered for the service and attributed the ineptitudes of the first two voyages to the misconduct of the guides and to the fact that Norton had deprived the expedition

of its women, who were essential not only as cooks and for sewing, but who also pitched the tents and by carrying the heavy loads left the men free to hunt.

Aided by Matonabee, the 'most sociable, kind and sensible Indian I had ever met with', Hearne at last got back to Churchill on 25th November, 1770, 'after having been absent eight months and twenty-two days, on a fruitless, or at least an unsuccessful journey'. Diffident though he had shown himself in resisting the insolence and the embezzlements of the Indians, he was probably following the only course possible in his circumstances, and he had by now shown a firm but quiet courage as a traveller, and had acquired experience of the north which made him quite invaluable for the purpose in hand, though as a trader he would probably lack the firmness required. He would lack knowledge of the mentality of the Indians as traders, too. For he resented deeply the fact that the Northern Indians regarded him exactly in the same way as the Southern Indians regarded Pink, Tomison, Cocking and the other Company's men sent among them. They were 'so inconsiderate' that they naturally believed that he must have come among them in order to trade, and they constantly applied to him 'as if I had brought the Company's warehouse with me'. Some asked for presents 'as if they had been at one of the Company's Factories' while others offered to trade furs. 'This unaccountable behaviour of the Indians' occasioned a great deal of serious reflection to Hearne. But he was nowhere near the heart of the matter; he neither understood the Indian approach to trade and the necessities of life, nor the common merchant's maxim that there is a great difference in price between a willing seller and a willing buyer. When they knew he was utterly dependent on buying, the Indians asked him three times the price for food which they would have charged at the factory, where they were utterly dependent on selling; and they gave nothing for nothing. To us this seems harsh and unfriendly conduct as between travelling companions, but not altogether unexpected in view of the Indian way of life and scale of values. To Hearne it was not only iniquitous, it was also incomprehensible.

Disappointed though Hearne might be, and as Moses Norton certainly was, the Committee ultimately found his Journal and map 'very pleasing'. A further year's experiment with the whale fishery was in hand, so that he could not yet be given command of the brig *Charlotte*, but he was again appointed to be mate of the *Churchill*, so as to give him an official post, and he was promised compensation for the delay in getting his own command. All of this, however, lay

in the future; in the meantime Hearne was at the disposal of Moses Norton. And Norton, having the attractive and eager Matonabbee at hand, sent Hearne back on his tracks again after a mere twelve days at the fort.

Experienced though Hearne was by this time, his Journal of his third voyage leaves it clear that not Hearne but Matonabbee was in command. Hearne was on the best and most sympathetic terms with this remarkable Indian, whose 'benevolence and universal humanity to all the human race, according to his abilities and manner of life, could not be exceeded by the most illustrious personage now on record', and his sketch of the character of the Indian has been noted by his editor, J. B. Tyrrell, as 'one of the most appreciative and sympathetic accounts of a North American Indian that has come to my notice'. There can be no doubt of the remarkable qualities of Matonabbee. But equally there can be little doubt that Hearne's sketch of his character, and the way in which the Indian was allowed to dictate the course of the expedition, even to dictate its conduct in some matters which were repugnant to the white man, were signs of the easy and complaisant disposition of Hearne and of his manner of painting characters in black and white. For in just the same way as he painted the character of Moses Norton in revolting colours but yet in his text revealed him as a shrewd master and an indulgent father, and described Joseph Stephens under whom he had served in the *Success* as 'a man of the least merit I ever knew', so the impeccable Matonabbee appears from an analysis of the text as a man who murdered one of his wives because she cast doubts on his ability to satisfy more than seven wives, and who attempted to murder the husband of a woman whom he wanted to add to the seven 'Grenadiers' whom he already had as wives. Perhaps it was as well that Hearne had learned to be complaisant and to tolerate not only Indian food but Indian manners; for, as he frequently remarked, he was completely in their hands and could not possibly accomplish his purpose without their help. In his very real friend and companion, Matonabbee, he had a man who was clearly as devoted to the project of reaching the Coppermine by land as he was himself, and who had a more knowledgeable approach to the problem.

Whereas in his two former voyages Hearne had, from the start, set off in a north-westerly direction, Matonabbee took him off in December 1772 towards the west. The simple merit of this plan was that it fitted in with, and was designed for, the geographical factors involved—as Hearne's previous ventures were not. Northwards from Churchill the traveller was condemned to a rough and broken

land, often strewn with boulders, and with no vegetation save moss, on which the deer fed in the summer months and from which the Indians who followed the deer north made their fires. There was no forest, and no wood. At Churchill itself the lack of trees was often enough felt, and it was accepted that the post lay just outside the line between the forest belt and the barren lands. Any expedition to the north ought to take this fact into account, and it was the supreme and simple merit of Matonabee's plan that he proposed to travel westwards through the winter, and then to turn and strike north when he had reached the latitude of the Coppermine River, and when the deer would also be moving northwards. Thus he secured that his party should be kept well-fed and well-occupied, hunting deer in the plains during the winter months when they would have starved if they had gone straight north, and that they could then follow the deer north in the spring. Since the outstanding feature of Hearne's journeys was that he took only his clothes and his gun and ammunition, and lived on the country as the Indians did, the plan put forward by Matonabee fitted the case; any other course would have involved taking large stocks of provisions and would have meant outfitting the sort of top-heavy Arctic expedition which only a government department could undertake.

Matonabee's plan was adopted almost without discussion, and the party travelled uneventfully westwards during the winter. It was 18th April before they turned to the northward, and then they carried with them the wood and the birch-rind which they would need to make their canoes and snow-shoes and to rig their tents. At Clowey Lake (which has not yet been satisfactorily identified) Hearne met a great disillusionment, for his party was joined by over two hundred Indians who proposed to accompany him for the sole purpose of murdering any Eskimos whom they might encounter. Hearne's expostulations brought him into so much trouble that he was obliged to change his tone and to say 'that I did not care if they rendered the name and race of the Esquimaux extinct'. Thus reinforced, the party met little trouble in striking Coppermine River on 13th July. That 'Long-wished for spot', however, proved a sore disappointment; they came to the river at Sandstone Rapids, above thirty miles from its mouth, and immediately it became apparent that the tales of a great river up which sea-going ships could sail, to bring the copper out as ballast, were nonsense; the river was scarcely navigable for an Indian canoe, everywhere full of shoals, and there were three rapids in sight when Hearne first set eyes on it.

The disappointment at the river was followed by utter disgust and

nausea at the brutal and degrading massacre of about twenty Eskimo men, women and children, whom the Indians surprised sleeping in their tents, while Hearne 'stood neuter in the rear'. He had decided to keep up with the assassins for fear that any escaping Eskimos might assault him if they found him by himself, thinking him to be an Indian. None escaped. The poor explorer named the spot Bloody Falls, and so it has been known ever since; and, ever since, the very thought of the scene he witnessed, and of the subsequent defilements, brought tears to Samuel Hearne's eyes.

This episode interfered seriously with Hearne's survey of the river. But he says he followed it to its mouth, finding it still shoal, and emptying into the sea over a bar. He erected a mark, and took possession in the name of the Hudson's Bay Company; but his heart was not in the work, and although later explorers have identified Bloody Falls without any doubt from the human remains still to be found there, they have found Hearne's description of the river so inaccurate as to make them wonder whether he actually walked to its mouth or merely viewed it from a hill.

Disappointed by the river, and dispirited by the massacre, Hearne was even more disillusioned by the copper-mine itself. At about thirty miles to the south-south-east of the mouth of the river he found 'This mine, if it deserves the appellation'. So far was it from the Indian description that instead of finding the hills 'entirely composed of that metal, all in handy lumps, like a heap of pebbles', he and all his companions had to spend nearly four hours before they found a single piece of metal in this 'jumble of rocks and gravel'. This, it is true, was a fine piece of copper, weighing about four pounds, and it duly came into the possession of the Committee in London.

With all his disappointments, Hearne had without any doubt accomplished the purpose of his journey. He had, as he modestly claimed, fully complied with the orders of his masters, and had put a final end to all disputes concerning a North-west Passage. He had seen, and in some sort surveyed, the mouth of the Coppermine. He had stood on the shores of the Arctic Ocean, and had got a fine sample of the virgin copper itself. Now it remained for him to make the return journey to Churchill and to render his report.

His route in returning is even less traceable than in going, for although throughout his Journal the precise observations are hard to follow and at times obviously inaccurate, this is more marked on his return, when his watch had stopped and he had lost his quadrant again. He had been fitted out with an old Elton's quadrant, which

had been lying about York Fort for thirty years or more, the only one available in the short time between his second and his third journeys, and it cannot have been a satisfactory instrument. But invaluable as Hearne's *Journal* is as a narrative of his epic voyage, its chief merit is not in its geographical information. Hearne's editor, Mr. Tyrrell, who had himself travelled much of the same ground, suggested that the map which he produced was probably the rough sketch drawn by Matonabee, and that it was inconceivable that Hearne could have checked by observations with his quadrant, even before he had lost it. His *Journal* is chiefly valuable for its insight into the life of the Chipewyan Indians, of which it gives an 'accurate, sympathetic and patently truthful record'.

This aspect of Hearne's *Journal* was certainly much in evidence on the return voyage. Having rejoined his women, whom he had left behind for the last murderous stage of the journey to the ocean, Matonabee decided to return to the southward, leaving the lands of the Chipewyans, with whom he was at that time at odds, and travelling by way of Great Slave Lake and Slave River. Hearne, mildly remonstrating, 'foot-foundered' for the first time, but convinced that the most interesting part of his journey was over, followed where Matonabee was determined to go, in pursuit of moose and beaver. At Great Slave Lake he left the 'jumble of rocks and hills' of the northern lands and came into a fine level country, with not a hill to be seen, not a stone to be found, and plentifully supplied with buffalo, moose, beaver, martens, and other animals. It was March before they left this rich country of the Athapascows (the Slaves) and 30th June before Hearne, in good health after an absence of eighteen months and twenty-three days, arrived back at Churchill.

It was the end of a magnificent feat of travelling, accomplished, as were all of the great Arctic explorations of the Company's men, with the minimum of equipment, almost in the ordinary way of duty and by means of living with, and in the same manner as, the Indians. This method of travel not only goes far to explain Hearne's success, it also enlivens his narrative and makes it a potent contribution to the history of the fur trade. He notes the stability of character of the Chipewyans as compared with the Southern Indians, the fact that they seldom traded for brandy though they would drink it if it were given to them, and that they required firm handling to prevent them from defrauding and exploiting the English. They were strangers to the very name of gratitude, morose and covetous to a man. Yet he found them the mildest Indians that the Company had to deal with,

never heated with liquor, always in their senses, and never violent except for bad language.

With all his complaisance Hearne was not deceived by his Indian friends, and he had seen enough of them to know some of the problems of trading with them. He had thought about trading problems too, and could quote Malachi Postlethwayt on the subject of Labour—perhaps a proof that a copy of the *Dictionary of Commerce* was among the reading matter available at Churchill, and certainly an argument that Hearne knew some of the rudiments of economic theory even if he did not always apply them. He realised that the Northern Indians, able to procure an easy subsistence by killing deer in pounds, had little real need for trade with the Europeans, and though he wrote that he had continuously tried to stimulate industry in them he confessed that he could not see that it was any advantage to the Indian to develop habits of trade and dependency. Nor could he see the advantage to the Company in drawing numbers of such people down to trade; it would be better to encourage a class of trading middlemen who would buy up the small surpluses of furs and bring them down. These middlemen would get a certain social standing, would supply the others at a profit with the small quantities of iron and other goods which they needed, and would keep away from the posts and from the long, wasteful, and dangerous journey the 'large parcels' of beggars who brought scarce enough furs to pay for the victuals which they ate while on the plantation, and whose begging and stealing were a constantly mounting expense for the Company. Hearne was convinced that those Indians who had least to do with the factories were the happiest.

There was a wealth of shrewd, realistic, and sympathetic reasoning in this. But Hearne was not consistent, and at a later stage in his *Journal* he plainly deprecated the profits which the 'yearly traders' took from the Copper and Dogrib Indians and thought the reasons why the latter had not been induced to visit Churchill were superstition and the fact that they were so often plundered on the journey. It was 'a political scheme' of the Chipewyans to prevent such intercourse, and Hearne thought it doubtful if trade would ever be set up.

Perhaps because he was in company with Chipewyans who were so deeply involved in this middleman trade, perhaps because, in the absence of river-routes, transport would obviously be out of all proportion difficult, Hearne did not discuss in his third *Journal* the problems of establishing a post towards the Coppermine instead of drawing the Indians down to Churchill. But he plainly saw the consequences of setting up subsidiary posts, for he met a band of

Indians who had been granted debt at Churchill but who were taking their season's trappings up to trade with the sloop at Knapp's Bay as a means of evading payment of their debt.

The quiet courage, thoughtfulness, and devotion to duty of the man shine through the attractively written pages of Hearne's Journal. Clearly in him the Company had at its disposal a servant who should be entrusted with the new developments which were in hand when, modestly hoping that at least he would 'wipe off, in some measure, the ill-grounded and unjust aspersions of Dobbs, Ellis, Robson and the American Traveller; who have all taken much pains to condemn the conduct of the Hudson's Bay Company, as being averse from discoveries, and from enlarging their trade', he marched quietly and competently into Prince of Wales' Fort.

His Journal and the map which he had made on his second unsuccessful journey had already greatly pleased the Committee, they rejoiced to think that Hearne had set forth a third time, and when the report of his success and safe return, together with his Journal and the two maps which he had made on his third voyage, came to their hands they found it all 'very acceptable'. This happened with the return of the ships in the fall of 1772, for Hearne and Matonabee had travelled fast and light on the last stage of their journey back to Churchill so as to be there before the ship arrived from England. So the Committee got the evidence of Hearne's qualities, and of his success in travelling with Indians, at the same time as they got the memorandum from Andrew Graham, based on the evidence of John Cole, and proclaiming that even Graham was now converted to the need for building a trading post inland.

Graham had recommended Hearne as one of the two possible men to take charge of the new venture, and with his Journal in their hands the Committee seem to have felt no hesitation. While Hearne spent the winter as mate on board the *Charlotte*, the Committee made plans for the inland establishment and put him in command. He was to meet Cocking, Primeau, Cole, Bove, Batt and Allen—the whole strength of the Company's Inlanders and deserters from the Pedlars—at the Pas on the Saskatchewan. There he was to take command and, having ascertained the precise latitude and longitude of the spot (which the Committee must have been really anxious to peg down on the map), was to build his post and start an open trade. Having made up their mind to the change in policy, the Committee were anxious to make a start, for the opposition of the Pedlars had to be taken seriously.

The route from York was accepted as the best approach from the

Bay to the Saskatchewan, and thither Hearne repaired in August 1773, together with Robert Longmoor, hoping that the two large canoes which Graham had ordered the previous year would have been brought down by the Indians and that he and his crew could go straight inland and set up the post that same winter. On arrival, however, he found that the canoes had not been delivered and that it was already accepted at York that the venture would have to be postponed for a further year. Isaac Batt had already been sent inland, to warn the Indians of the Company's intention and to procure canoes for the inland voyage in the summer of 1774, but the shortage of water in the rivers turned him back, and it seemed possible that further delay would be inevitable since the much-needed canoes could not now be got down in 1774.

Hearne spent the winter at York, or at least attached to that post. In fact he journeyed to Churchill and also to Severn, and took council with Graham and Umfreville, who drew up a loading-table and an 'establishment' of goods and men to fit the new situation. They were more than a little doctrinaire in this, for they still worked on the assumption that the large canoes might be available in time, and only worked out the loads for small 'Indian' canoes as a sort of insurance against disappointment. Ferdinand Jacobs at York was more realistic and worked on the assumption that the large canoes would not be brought down—and he proved right. The project was therefore worked out on the basis of using the returning canoes in which the Indians had come down to trade. For this kind of transport the goods were to be parcelled up into canvas-bound packs of twenty pounds' weight each, small and light enough for the Indians to be able to handle. Graham thought that the Indians could not possibly have objected if they had added an extra ten pounds to the weight of each pack, but Graham had no experience of conditions inland.

For the future, once the post had been set up and the master there could get his own canoes made in the interior, Graham thought that three large canoes should suffice in the first instance, each capable of carrying up to a thousand pounds' weight of goods, for which he advocated packs of fifty pounds each, pointing out that the Canadian packs weighed eighty pounds.

Apart from the trouble over canoes, Hearne set about his project with a will. But he found it difficult to get the ordinary servants of the Company to accept inland service as part of their normal duties. Some few absolutely refused—and were sent home 'as an Example to Others not to deny their Duty'. For the most part the Orkneymen demurred but accepted the task. During the winter Hearne got

together twelve men who were prepared to go with him, while Graham wrote that the establishment would need sixteen men and, visibly affected by Cocking's strictures on the Canadian servants, modified his former views to the extent of saying that not all who offered to desert to the Company should be accepted, but that prime picked men of English origin, strong and robust, should be sought and would prove essential to the enterprise. This was a view which Jacobs did not share; he felt, as did Cocking, that the Company's present servants, though not so expert at first, would prove admirable, and in time 'as fitting for the service as the Pedlars'. And Jacobs was to prove right on this issue.

Canoes and servants being in some sort organised, it remained to feed the expedition. Graham was certain that such a party would need more European provisions than the small canoes could be expected to carry, and that they must therefore 'use the Canadian manner'. For this, of course, Hearne had plenty of experience. But a canoe journey to the Saskatchewan was a race against the onset of winter utterly different from a foot journey across the Barrens of the North. A delay of a day or two to hunt or fish might well mean that the canoes would not reach their destination. Moreover, as Jacobs pertinently remarked, the 'Canadian manner' of travel was not relevant, for the Canadians passed on their way inland through a country rich in Indian corn and wild rice whereas the Company's men could hope for little except fish and what they took from the factory to last them into the interior. He therefore gave the expedition as much food as he could, and it is most interesting to note that at this time he was, when possible, trading food which would serve for such a journey—tongues, dried meat, bladders of fat, and even bundles of 'pimmicon', the great mainstay of the inland traveller who could not afford the time to hunt.

It was late in June 1774 before Hearne left York Fort for the interior. A last modification of plans had to be undertaken since the Indians did not come down to trade in large enough flotillas for the whole expedition to go inland together—and Jacobs was justified in his scepticism, for there were no large canoes brought down; all had to go inland as passengers in the canoes of the Indians. Hearne therefore had to allow his party to proceed inland in sections as canoes became available, and he himself, with his carpenter and Robert Longmoor, was ready by 21st June. The others, including Cocking, were to meet him inland at the first opportunity.

The first journey amply proved the great advantage which the Company enjoyed in its route to the interior. For whereas the Pas

had proved about the limit of the Pedlars' penetration in one year from Michilimackinac, Hearne was writing on 3rd September (and the letter was received at York Fort within three weeks) that he had selected and was clearing a site for his post at Pine Island Lake, some sixty miles above the Pas.

The log-tent which Hearne built there, in which he spent his first winter inland, was the origin of Cumberland House, and the choice of site made clear the new policy of the Company and revealed a threat to the Pedlars which they could not possibly fail to resist.

Hearne had not only gone further up-stream than their normal annual voyage had hitherto carried the Pedlars; he had chosen a spot of supreme value for control of the routes of the fur trade. Cocking had mentioned Pine Island Lake as a point at which the Beaver Indians carried their goods and canoes over from the Saskatchewan, and Hearne now chose the spot, after spending considerable time looking up and down the Saskatchewan, because the Indians told him that it was well placed for provisions and would be better for trade than the Pas (which he had very seriously considered) as 'laying in the middle between three Tribes'. 'This', it has been said, 'was the key to an entire system of waterways: westward lay the route to the Rockies, north to Athabaska, the Peace River Country, and the vast unknown beyond Great Slave Lake; east to the Churchill and the Nelson on the one hand, and Lake Winnipeg and Red River on the other. Here Cumberland House was built, a grave threat to the Canadian traders and the turning-point in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company.'

The advantages of the site were not so immediately apparent. The Indian leader who had gone inland with Cocking in 1772 tried to persuade Hearne that he should go higher up the river, and urged the difficulties which he would meet at Cumberland. But Hearne firmly told him that his intention was to serve the whole body of Indians, not one particular tribe, and refused to be moved by the Indians' desire 'of having goods brought as near their own doors as Possible, it is a Piece of Polisy in them to Praise their Part for the Plentifulness of Furrs and provisions and at the same time condemn every other Part'.

Thinly provided as he had been when he left York Fort, he had thought fit to send back some of his trade-goods and two pecks of oatmeal, to lighten his canoes on their way up Hayes River, and he suffered greatly from lack of food on the journey and arrived with little in the way of goods. He was glad to be joined by further small parties of his outfit, bringing with them both equipment and trade-

goods. William Flatt and Magnus Slater he found when he returned from prospecting a possible site at the Pas, and then came James Banks, also with powder, shot, cloth and blankets, kettles, tobacco and brandy. A fourth man, Robert Flatt, had taken a different route and was plundered and abandoned by his Indians at the mouth of the Saskatchewan; he was rescued and brought up to Hearne by Pedlars. Robert Davey came up as late as mid-October, but Matthew Cocking, from whose experience it was expected that Hearne would profit greatly, never arrived; nor did Isaac Batt and Charles Price Isham. Batt and Isham were abandoned by their Indians at Cedar Lake, and Cocking, coming up behind and finding them there, could neither leave them to starve nor offer them transport in his already heavily-laden canoes. He therefore stayed with them, crossed into Lake Winnipegosis, and thence by way of Red Deer River and Red Deer Lake made his way to Witch Lake (or God's Lake) where he spent the winter. He gathered much useful information about the Pedlars, but he lost Isaac Batt as a deserter during his voyage out in the spring of 1775, and he had the pit-saw, the medicine-chest and other equipment and goods which Hearne sadly missed during the winter.

Hearne missed Isaac Batt even more than he did Cocking, for he realised that the great problem was one of transportation, and he needed someone who could supervise the Indians in collecting birch-rind and could get them to make the large canoes which were needed. His final conclusion at the end of the year was that 'the greatest obstical that is likely to Prevent the Compy from geting goods inland is the want of Proper Cannoes, to Procure which I am Much at a loss what measures to take, as I find that no Payment or Promouses can enduce the Natives to make a Sufficient quantity'. He tried to procure birch-rind during the winter but the Indians, when it came to the point, refused to make canoes larger than their ordinary size, and were off to drink the Pedlars' rum as soon as they had made canoes for themselves. So that 'for want of Isaac Batt or some other Experianc'd person' Hearne was little better provided with canoes at the end than at the beginning of his winter at Cumberland, and was most thankful that Jacobs had managed to get some of the 'Half-home' Indians at York to build for him.

He would have welcomed Batt and Isham for their experience in other matters too, for the raw hands whom he had brought with him were entirely unacquainted, not only with the business of getting birch-rind but with 'evry other duty that is not Emediatly Preform'd at the Factory, none of them ever having ben farther from the Forts

than a Wooding or hunting tent'. As February brought changeable weather and difficult hunting, and the system of rations which had been necessary ever since December began to worry the men, Hearne found his own wealth of experience invaluable. In his journeys he had gone for days together on nothing but a drink of water and a pipe of tobacco, and he was steady and almost contented while his men found the contrast to the certain and good allowances at the factory alarming. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could persuade them that starvation was not around the corner, but he asserted his authority, as he did when, after the building of the permanent house had been started, they complained that at the factory they only worked for certain hours. He commanded them to work from six o'clock to six o'clock, and managed to get their support.

The difficulties which followed on using such raw hands are clear and important. But it is equally clear that Hearne and his men managed their first winter inland with remarkable equanimity, and with a very great measure of success. Hearne even managed to get Longmoor working again after six weeks out of action due to frost-bitten toes; he 'layd Robert Longmoor's Toes open which are froze to the Bone', and he sadly missed the medicine chest as he conducted his extempore operation. Apart from this, he kept his men fit and at work, he made an obviously good impression on the Indians, and when he came down to York Fort in June 1775 he started off from Cumberland House in company with thirty-two canoes of Indians, of whom seventeen intended to go all the way to York with him.

He had kept abreast of the Pedlars too, and had suffered no desertions among his men—perhaps because they were so raw they were not worth tempting. Nevertheless it was something of an achievement to have kept his men all loyal, for this was a time at which Primeau and Cole had returned to their former masters in 1773 (thereby emphasising the dangers to the Company in employing renegade Pedlars) and Batt also had succumbed. It was all very well for Hearne to point out, as others had before him, that the high prices at which the Pedlars' *voyageurs* were forced to buy their necessaries more than cancelled the apparent advantages which they had in higher rates of pay. The Hudson's Bay servants might well be better off in the long run, but they were subject to great and immediate temptation.

Hearne had been instructed to maintain a 'distant civility' to any Pedlars whom he might encounter, and had been warned that even high words might prove dangerous if the Pedlars should incite the

Indians to violence. In fact he received very kindly treatment from the Pedlars, for when they brought up the destitute Robert Flatt, whom they had picked up near Lake Winnipeg, they refused to accept any payment. Later in the year, some Pedlars passed Cumberland in a destitute condition, travelling between two of their houses in search of subsistence, and Hearne then had a chance to show his kindness; he took them in, put them on the same meagre rations as himself and his men, and was glad to be of service.

By the time he got back to York in June 1775 Hearne had therefore more than justified the Committee's apparently illogical choice of himself instead of Matthew Cocking. Not only was the new house in a fair way to be fit for the following winter when he set off for York, leaving his carpenter John Garrioch in command, but he was already thinking of further expansion.

Both Graham and Jacobs had realised already that the venture inland could not rest at the setting up of a single post. Jacobs had said that the Indians would want more settlements, and that men would have to be sent out from the main post, with goods to trade, if the Pedlars were to be prevented from getting the furs. Graham, at once more flamboyant and more detailed, had prophesied that the new post would soon open the way to grand discoveries in the unknown western parts of America, and had also foreseen that the men would have to be sent out to winter with the Indians if the provisions were to hold out. Hearne concluded his *Journal of the winter inland* by arguing that anything like the number of men needed to combat the Pedlars—and he reckoned that the opposition brought in about a hundred and fifty men—would have to be dispersed in order to get the necessary provisions, and he gave his opinion that one or two subsidiary posts would have to follow after the firm establishment of Cumberland. He proposed to name suitable places, and he said that if he had been provided with a suitable second-in-command he would have surveyed such sites during the summer of 1775, instead of coming down to the Bay.

Cocking arrived at York a few days after Hearne, and after a brief delay the latter went back to his inland command again. Cocking had been made Master at Severn while he was inland, and now went to take up that command. The roles, however, were soon reversed, and Hearne found himself in command at the Bay-side while Cocking commanded at Cumberland. When the Instructions for 1775 arrived at York Fort, Hearne was appointed to succeed the dead Moses Norton at Churchill, and Humphrey Marten, newly in command at York, decided that Cocking was the fittest man to go

up and take charge at Cumberland. Hearne returned to York, and so to Churchill, as soon as possible, leaving Cumberland in October 1775. This was the end of his active participation in inland settlement. But he had begun the Company's new venture remarkably well, with a well-built post on the ideal site, an example of quiet courage in the face of the difficulties of travel, toil and privations, and a shrewd appraisal of the action needed in the future.

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CHAPTER III

THE FUR TRADE EXPANDS TO ATHABASKA

Whether Hearne or Cocking was in command, there could be no doubt that by 1775 the Company's post at Cumberland was firmly established, and that henceforth the Pedlars would have to reckon with purposeful and organised trade by the Company on the Saskatchewan. Already the response to this move by the Company was clear. The Pedlars' answer took the form of stronger and more durable partnerships among themselves, and of a steady expansion towards Athabaska and the north-west.

Ever since the English had started to move out from Montreal and Quebec, partnerships of a sort had been a feature of the Pedlars' trade; often a former French *coureur* was employed to go into the woods on their behalf, on some form of profit-sharing. The terms and responsibilities varied with each arrangement, most of such partnerships were for the one year only, and little reliable detail can be written into the general picture. But something more stable was outlined in the large partnership which the deserter Cole had described to Andrew Graham in 1772, a partnership in which Corry and Franceways on the Saskatchewan reached back through McBeath and Todd at Michilimackinac to Blondeau at Montreal and Walker at Quebec. In the next year, 1773, can be traced the partnership of James Finlay (who had been inland of York Fort in 1768, offering to take on any servants who would desert from the Company) with the newly-arrived young Englishman, John Gregory. This was a partnership destined to last, and to accomplish much.

Neither of these two concerns was implicated in the combination which must have predominated in the minds of the traders in 1775, as Hearne came out from his newly-established post at Cumberland to take up his duties at York. Then a single licence was granted to James McGill, Benjamin Frobisher and Maurice Blondeau, for twelve canoes with seventy-eight men to go up from Michilimackinac, and the trade of the Saskatchewan was faced with an agreement between the four groups of Pedlars (including Alexander Henry) who had formerly competed for the trade there and who, in consequence, had bid up the prices of furs.

This combination was for one year only, and its purpose was

to reduce competition between the traders in the west. Only by strengthening and broadening the bases of their organisations could the Pedlars outdistance the Company and get further up the Saskatchewan, reaching out towards the north-west. The advantages of such an arrangement were obvious, and it was almost inevitable that some element of semi-permanency should creep into the transitory arrangements. Competition, fierce and often unscrupulous, between the traders in the north-west was by no means ended, but the advantages of amalgamations were obvious, and the means of achieving them had been demonstrated. They gave a broader front, of several traders perhaps covering the trade of several districts, and so they required more capital resources whilst at the same time they offered better security for investment. More enduring combinations among the merchants and financiers of Michilimackinac and Montreal therefore begin to be apparent, and in 1776 and the following years the term 'North West Company' begins to be used.

The elimination of competition by the formation of the syndicates and partnerships of 1772-5, by the four-cornered Saskatchewan agreement of 1775 and the 'North West Company' of 1776, were sensible and prophetic. More important was the activity of a comparatively unknown newcomer to the north, working outside the main combinations and evolving a system which would enable him, and all who followed him, to start their annual journey from the Grand Portage of Pigeon River on Lake Superior instead of from Michilimackinac. So they would vastly increase their power to penetrate into the north-west, and they would also arrive at the Pas and at Cumberland House before the Company's new supplies had been got up from York. In the endless struggle for greater penetrative power it seems to have been the New Englander Peter Pond who hit on the essential method, while the Frobishers, Alexander Henry, Cadotte, Patterson and Blondeau, were re-sorting their combinations so as to avoid competition among themselves and so as to outstrip the Company's efforts. New England born, Peter Pond had served in the British army on the Lake Champlain front in the Seven Years' War and then, as a sergeant, at the capture of Fort Niagara. In 1760 he was given a commission and as an officer he was present at the siege and surrender of Montreal. He was then twenty years old, and after trying a sea-voyage to the West Indies he married and settled down at Milford for three years during which his father tried his luck as one of the pioneers in the fur trade in the post-war years. Pond himself then entered into the trade from Detroit. He worked as far afield as Michilimackinac, and he was at

home among the assertive characters whom such a trade attracted. By 1772 he had taken a year off from the Indian trade for another tour to the West Indies—perhaps to let the air cool after he had killed a rival in a duel—and his knowledge and capacity were such that he was invited into partnership by Felix Graham, one of the more important traders by way of Green Bay to the Mississippi. The partnership was to be for trade from Michilimackinac, and in 1773 Pond set off with the outfit which Graham had sent up to him, in twelve canoes, to trade on the Mississippi and to winter at St. Peter's River. By 1774 he had done so well that on his return to Michilimackinac he bought out his partner, who had brought up another large cargo of trade-goods from New York, and Pond set off for another prosperous winter at St. Peter's River.

As an independent and successful trader, he was attracted to the north-west, with its better quality furs, and in 1775 he took his outfit from Michilimackinac to Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Superior, Grand Portage and Lake Winnipeg. Thence he travelled to the mouth of the Saskatchewan, through Cedar Lake, and up the river to the Pas. For much of his journey he was in company with Alexander Henry (the elder) and then with Joseph and Thomas Frobisher and Charles Patterson. Their voyage is a plain proof of the immense difficulties which had to be faced if the journey from Michilimackinac to the Pas or beyond was to be accomplished before the rivers froze. It was 26th October before the party reached Cumberland House, where Matthew Cocking treated them with civility though making it plain that they were unwelcome guests.

This was the year, 1775, in which Hearne handed over the new venture at Cumberland to Matthew Cocking and in which the effective combination of rival traders in the Saskatchewan was first marked, and Alexander Henry wrote of an amalgamation of the four interests who traded on the Saskatchewan. The Pedlars' party did in fact split at Cumberland House and the dispositions were such that the Hudson's Bay post was intercepted to north, west and south. Alexander Henry went to Beaver Lake (Sturgeon-weir River) with the Frobishers, cutting off the northern approaches to Cumberland. Up-river to the west went Henry's partner Cadotte, to winter with Finlay at Fort des Prairies (on the North Saskatchewan, above the Forks), while Patterson and Blondeau also went to the westwards. Pond retraced his steps a little and moved downstream past Cedar Lake and Lake Winnipegosis to Mossy River and Lake Dauphin, where he wintered. But the fact that he took up a position to the south of Cumberland House was probably due to his in-

dependence and his previous experience on the Mississippi, as well as to the smallness of his outfit (he had but two canoes where Henry and Cadotte had eight, Patterson fourteen, and the Frobishers twenty). There is no evidence that he joined any amalgamation that year.

Pond did, however, play his full part in the expansion of the fur trade to the north-west, and in doing so he certainly acted in concert with the Frobishers and Alexander Henry. To penetrate further into the north-west and so to out-pace both the rival Pedlars and the Hudson's Bay men entailed a shift of base from Michilimackinac to Grand Portage, and therefore a more complicated partnership, so that goods could be brought up to him over the first leg of the journey and furs shipped back out. Such partnerships were available, and it is possible that Pond at this time made such an arrangement with the man who later became his partner, George McBeath. For McBeath was deeply involved in the trade to the north-west, and that in such a way that in 1776 he might well have served Peter Pond by providing the essential link with Montreal which would allow Pond to bring his furs only as far down as Grand Portage, there to hand over his returns, take up his trade-outfit and speed back for another winter on the Saskatchewan. Montreal connections were absolutely vital if the Pedlars were to continue their trade, for the War of American Independence had made New York and Albany impossible as centres for trade with England, and although the trade of Montreal was certainly interrupted when the city was captured by the Americans in 1775 and recaptured by the British in 1776, yet it profited from the immigration of many merchants who had formerly traded from Albany and New York. Simon McTavish, later to be 'The Marquis' of the fur trade, was among the immigrants, as was the merchant and banking firm of Phyn and Ellice, which in later years supplied the partnership of Pond and McBeath. In 1776 McBeath was certainly engaged in some business deals with Simon McTavish, so that there was ample background for a trade connection which would have allowed him to outfit Peter Pond at Grand Portage in 1776, independent of the Frobishers, and in 1777 he took out a licence for six canoes from Michilimackinac, with which he quite probably met Pond and saved him the long journey from Grand Portage downwards. In all probability, therefore, Pond had McBeath at his back in 1776, and behind McBeath stood a combination which could have outfitted that intrepid Pedlar at the Grand Portage; certainly he returned speedily to the field in that year and was there, at the Forks of the Saskatchewan, driving his trade in rivalry with the Hudson's Bay Company.

Peter Pond was certainly not the first to use the method of outfitting at Grand Portage instead of at Michilimackinac; the Portage had been an important rendezvous for many years before 1776. Nor was Pond the first to arrange his affairs so as to secure time to push well up the Saskatchewan. Enjoying a temporary alliance with McGill and Blondeau, the brothers Joseph and Thomas Frobisher had got up to the east end of Cumberland Lake in 1774 and had wintered there. They had shewn, too (as Pond and his successors were to show even more effectively), that as soon as the Pedlars' routine allowed them to get so far up the Saskatchewan they were bound to overspill north into the drainage area of Churchill and to threaten at source the trade of that post. For while the Frobishers were at their log hut on Cumberland Lake Joseph Hansom had come among them, sent by Moses Norton (whose servant he was) to check on the security of Churchill's trade. Hansom travelled in 1773 up the Churchill Indians' route to the Height of Land and so by Sturgeon-weir River and Lakes Namew and Cumberland to the Saskatchewan, for some of Churchill's trade came from the area east of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan. On his return he found the Frobishers established on Cumberland Lake, and he wintered with them, being forced to do so since the Pedlars had got hold of all the Indians to hunt and 'be Home Indians to them'. The Pedlars had come in with twenty canoes between them, and Hansom was equally depressed by the difficulties in getting inland from Churchill and by the power of the Company's rivals. However, in the spring of 1774 he rallied a substantial body of Indians and began to lead them down to Churchill with their furs, most of which were already pledged for debts contracted at the fort. But as he and his Indians went from the Saskatchewan to the Churchill River by way of Sturgeon-weir River, he there met Joseph Frobisher. The Pedlar was waiting the arrival of Louis Primeau, who was travelling round to get the Indians to come to trade. But Hansom and his Indians were not to be missed and, overcoming the Indians' scruples, Frobisher forced his trade upon them, took as many furs as his canoes would carry, and by this strange form of forced trading gave to Frog Portage (as the place was called) the name of Portage du Traite.

Joseph Frobisher's 'pillaging' of the Indians at Portage du Traite became one of the celebrated stories of the fur trade, often repeated to show how a Pedlar who knew his job could get the better of the Hudson's Bay people with their lack of goods and their unrealistic approach. In fact, Hansom had not been sent to trade but to report,

and the substance of his report was sound, and was well taken. The Pedlars were astride the trade of Churchill, as of York, Severn and Albany, and this before Cumberland House had been established and before Peter Pond had gone up from Grand Portage in 1776.

Peter Pond therefore, forceful and effective though he was, cannot be claimed as a complete innovator in 1776, nor was he alone in the field. In addition to him, the opposition consisted of two factions which kept three posts going at the start of that winter. But soon they all amalgamated and all went to the new post at Sturgeon River except Isaac Batt (the former employee of the Hudson's Bay Company) and a few men who stayed at the Lower Post at Fort des Prairies. Here was seen the normal working of the Pedlars, by combinations and by individual enterprise, and the Company's reaction in the struggle for trade. Apart from the Pedlars on the Saskatchewan, James Tute took two canoes well west to Beaver Lake while a post which Primeau had set up to the north-west at Ile-à-la-Crosse was also in occupation and made contact during the winter with the other posts.

Against this expansion of the Pedlars, and the organisation behind it, the men of Cumberland reacted strongly. Matthew Cocking, serving inland yet once more despite a serious rupture which made travel a dangerous hardship for him, sent his men out to try to get ahead of the Pedlars in their contacts with the Indians, and again he strongly advocated the setting up of trade posts further inland than Cumberland. Robert Longmoor and a small party were sent up to the plains; they wintered in Eagle Hills and did not get back to Cumberland until February 1777, when they were almost immediately sent off again, to stay above the Pedlars until the river broke, with the object of trading provisions from the plains Indians who 'pounded the buffalo', of persuading the Indians to go down to York with their summer trade, and of choosing a site on which an outpost from Cumberland might possibly be built. Other Hudson's Bay men were sent to winter with the Indians to the southward and also to the north, but Longmoor's party was the most important, especially in that it brought in reports of the Pedlar's post, where Longmoor spent several days, and where he was hospitably received. Then, in May 1777, Cocking sent off William Tomison with six men (reducing his main post to six) with a supply of trading goods to induce the Indians to come in to trade at Cumberland, or perhaps even to go down to York.

Apart from any success which he may have had in persuading the Indians to go down to York, Cocking managed to double the

returns from Cumberland, which he brought to over six thousand Made-beaver. This, he allowed, was little enough compared with the cargoes which the Pedlars brought out, but the expedients which he had adopted forced the Pedlars to trade at exorbitant rates. Cocking was convinced that he must very seriously have reduced the profits of his rivals; he even had examples of Indians who had been completely clothed and given substantial presents without having traded at all, and while reiterating his conviction that further settlements were necessary (if only to mitigate the provisions problem at Cumberland, where the fishery was proving less of a certainty than he had hoped) he experimented with different routes to York by the Sea Lake and Spruce Rivers and claimed that if the Company only had 'convenience of Carriage to Transport their Goods' the Pedlars must surely be ruined.

Cocking certainly provided an active opposition, and matched the suavity of the Pedlars with a truculent resistance which must have seemed a little out of place when it was set against the fact that he had only fifteen men under his command. He knew, moreover, that his men had certain defects for the kind of work on which he had to send them. Willing enough to get away from their masters and to go to winter with Indians, they seemed to lack affability and failed to get on with their hosts, who in consequence often starved them. The Company's rules, too, were not designed for the position in which Cocking found himself, and he wrote that he had been forced despite the rule to trade liquor for beaver.

The Pedlars had their own troubles. Two of their men were murdered by the Indians, who began seriously to resent the high-handed way of trade which the Pedlars practised. The post under Tute at Beaver Lake was short of provisions, and some of their men were ready to desert to the Company, including the former English employee, Isaac Batt. Cocking's tactics seem to have been sound, especially in sending Longmoor above the Pedlars on the Saskatchewan to hold the Indians there until the river broke, and then sending up a further party under William Tomison with a fair selection of trade-goods. Equally well-judged was his move in sending Robert Davey off to the north in May 1777, with some trade-goods and eight gallons of liquor. The Frobisher who had wintered at Sturgeon River had preceded Davey to Beaver Lake and thence to Churchill River, and shadowed him up the Churchill River until they met Louis Primeau bringing the Athabaska Indians and their furs to trade from Ile-à-la-Crosse. Trade was brisk and competitive, and although the Pedlars bought at villainous prices, the

Indians had not the power to resist their liquor. Davey got only a hundred and seventy-five beaver, and the Athabaska Indians reinforced Cocking's notions when they pleaded that nothing save a Company's post towards Athabaska would prevent the Pedlars from getting all their furs.

Another year, however, was to pass before this policy could be taken up, and it was a year in which the Pedlars fully demonstrated the need for such a move. In the summer of 1777 they had drawn out all of their men, and William Walker, whom Cocking had left in command at Cumberland, profited by the fact that no Pedlars were left above him or to the south of him although he found that habits of trading with the Canadians left the Indians unimpressed with the small quantities of spirits or of tobacco which he could give them. But when the opposition began to gather again the Company's men found that formidable development had taken place. First to arrive in 1777 was Captain Tute with four canoes; he reached Cumberland, short of food, on 1st October, and was helped out 'as becomes Englishmen one to another in this part of the World'. From him the Company's men learned that seventeen canoes had already gone up the river and twenty more were coming. It soon became clear that Cumberland was surrounded once more, with four canoes to the north, two downstream at the Pas, and thirty-six canoes up the Saskatchewan. There, at Fort des Prairies, Peter Pond, Booty Graves (an Englishman) and Bruce, were working in partnership, and John Ross at the Pas was also in with them. Indeed the Hudson's Bay men were told that all the Pedlars, including those at the 'Upper Settlement' at Sturgeon River, were joined as formerly in one general concern, and during the winter Hansom received a letter signed jointly by Graves, Charles McCormick, Bruce, Pond, Pangman, Blondeau and Nicholas Montour. In addition Tute and his four canoes were at Beaver Lake and St. Germain was also there.

Against such a concentration Humphrey Marten as Chief at York Fort had ordered that in 1777-8 the long-proposed outpost from Cumberland should be established. The previous year had brought some slight increase in the returns at York and at Cumberland, but in view of the relentless and organised opposition which was gathering, Marten felt that the step must be taken to break through the cordon of Pedlars. Marten's character has been the subject of some discussion, since he incurred the displeasure of Edward Umfreville, who pilloried him in his writings as a drunken and despotic coward who neglected his duties. As a constant sufferer from gout and gravel, Marten was probably not averse

from strong liquor; but the régime which he adopted to maintain his health was not compatible with regular over-indulgence. His voluminous correspondence can leave no doubt whatever that he was keenly alive to the problems with which he was faced, was on the whole a kindly (if perhaps choleric) Governor who had the interests of his men at heart, and that he was actively and intelligently concerned with the purpose of inward expansion from York. In 1777 Marten ordered Joseph Hansom (who had brought up the first flotilla of canoes from York to Cumberland and who took command there) to set up the outpost from Cumberland. This was to be a temporary post only and was to be near the buffalo-hunting grounds for the double purpose of procuring food and of preventing the Indians from trading with the Pedlars.

Marten hoped that the new house would push the Company's settlements about four hundred and fifty miles further up the Saskatchewan and that this would outdistance the Pedlars. But his plan was not fulfilled. The decision was made in July, when Cocking had not yet arrived back at York and when the ship from England with its orders from the Committee had not yet come to the post. The assumption was that Cocking, despite his rupture, would again take command of Cumberland, and that William Tomison would lead the new expansion. It was in fact Tomison who brought the order to Cumberland, where he arrived on 12th September, 1777. On the same day Robert Longmoor arrived; he had used 'the North track' from York and had saved over a fortnight on the journey, so that he bore letters dated at York on 9th August. By that time Cocking had got down to York and had made it clear that it was seriously dangerous for him to undertake long journeys, but the orders from London had not yet arrived. So Longmoor's letter from Marten was to make provisional arrangements in case Cocking should not return inland. In that case William Tomison was to take command at Cumberland. This possibility seems to have been enough to prevent Hansom from sending Tomison off to set up the new post and also to prevent him from sending the party under the command of anyone else. The decision was the more remarkable because Hansom (who was somewhat jealous of his authority and who had refused to go inland as second to Cocking on the ground that he ought to have been made second-in-command at York) did not hand over the command of Cumberland to Tomison until the following spring.

Presumably he would have maintained that his order to do so was only provisional and that until it was confirmed that Cocking would

not in fact come inland the order did not apply. The ship *Prince Rupert* got to York on 18th August, 1777; it carried orders that in view of his health Cocking should be given command at Severn. But although this meant that the provisional arrangements would come into operation, and that Hansom should hand over Cumberland to Tomison, the confirmation did not reach the outpost until 25th March, 1778. Then Hansom was definitely ordered to hand over. Up till that date Tomison had been used on the ordinary duties of the post, and on making journeys to the Indians—and he was absent on such a journey when his commission arrived. The result was that the new outpost was not attempted that year.

Apart from this failure, the Company's servants did quite well. The year's returns from Cumberland were 5,900 Made-beaver, and this was achieved by considerable enterprise. Robert Longmoor and three men were sent off to 'the Buffalo country' with an assortment of trade-goods in late September. Their purpose was not only to get furs but also to procure canoes. Isaac Batt and his family (once more in the Company's service) set off in the same direction; apart from getting a canoe made, he was to kill provisions to maintain the Company's men when they came up to trade in the following spring. Towards spring William Tomison was sent on a trading voyage towards the Pedlars' house at the Pas; and, when the river broke up in May, and he had taken command, Tomison sent five men up the Saskatchewan to trade above the Pedlars and followed this up by sending Hansom and four men to the northward, to trade with the Indians from Athabaska.

For the most part these expeditions did little more than provide an opposition to the Pedlars and render their trade difficult and costly; they produced no great quantities of furs and they were unable to overcome the advantage which the Pedlars held in numbers and in goods. At the end of May 1778 Tomison was despondent, with only about two thousand skins in hand and expecting a serious drop in the year's trade. But from Beaver Lake and Athabaska came a welcome relief. There Charles Isham had spent the winter, tenting near the Pedlars' post, and Tomison knew that of the two Canadians Tute was 'bad with the Veneral disorder' while the other, St. Germain, had roused the hostility of the Indians by trading hard with them. There were also serious disputes between the Pedlars and their men, so that although none of the Company's men knew the route (Isham had gone snow-blind) the prospects of trade were good. In the event Hansom got more furs than he could transport, and his returns of over two thousand skins from less than a

thousand beaver in trade-goods put a different complexion on the year's trade.

The recovery was accompanied by a further successful experiment in the difficult art of canoe-building, and Robert Longmoor went down to York in a canoe of his own making. The routes, too, received serious attention, partly in the hope that a way might be found which would enable more easily-managed light boats to replace canoes. Here the interest and activity of Humphrey Marten are noticeable; he had been instrumental in sending Tomison back to Cumberland by way of Hayes River, Fox River and Lake Winnipeg (the Sea Lake) in 1776. This was the route most used, although boats were not as yet practicable on it. The alternative lay by the 'North River', that is by way of Nelson River, Grass River, Cranberry Lake, Sturgeon-weir River and Sturgeon Lakes. Both routes were used in the transport of 1777-8.

Yet the general atmosphere of this year, 1777-8, was one of stubborn but unenterprising opposition. Tomison was outstandingly worthy and honest, but he was dour as well, and the initiative obviously lay with the Canadians. Of the new drive which impelled them there were two ominous signs recorded by the Hudson's Bay men as the season closed. One was that, instead of drawing out all their men as they went down with their furs, as in the previous year, the Pedlars left behind them parties to collect provisions during the summer months. This was essential if the posts on the Saskatchewan were ever to be used as centres from which further ventures could be launched.

The second recorded warning was that on 18th May, 1778, Peter Pond came down from the 'upper post' at Sturgeon River. He had with him the unexpended 'remains' of the syndicate which had been formed extempore on the Saskatchewan by himself and six other Pedlars, and this consisted of five large canoes of goods. This in itself was a sign of the generous scale on which the Canadians conducted the trade; Pond had a year's supply of goods still in hand at the end of the season. Equally significant was the way in which he proposed to use this bounty; he meant to penetrate into the Athabaska country as far as he could go and to spend the next winter there. Whether the surplus of goods was the result of long-sighted planning or merely of chance cannot be established. But Pond's grasp of the opportunity is clearly recognisable. He had already brought forward his base from Michilimackinac to the Grand Portage; now he could set off from Cumberland for Athabaska in early summer instead of in the late autumn, as would have been his

limit if he had been forced to come up from Grand Portage. Here the inspiration and the organisation were not necessarily Pond's. The surplus of goods seems to have been the produce of the common pool of the Pedlars, and the example of the returns which Thomas Frobisher had got from Ile-à-la-Crosse was the inspiration which led the traders to send Pond off. But the venture fitted in well with the pioneering individualism of Pond, and the expansion of the conflict with the Pedlars from the Saskatchewan to Athabaska was his personal contribution to the penetration of the fur trade into the north-west.

The Company's men in 1778 could do nothing to rival so determined and well-equipped a move. They were in fact hard put to it to resist the lavish and hectoring Pedlars on the Saskatchewan. But Cumberland House had been kept going for five years, and though Marten's orders to set up an outpost from Cumberland were not carried out in 1777, in 1778 Robert Longmoor promised that he would go as far as any of the Canadians, and Marten sent him on this errand. The emphasis was still defensive rather than offensive, and, in explaining his decision to London, Marten felt forced to apologise (whether for his prolixity or for his decision is not clear) and to explain that the Canadians were expanding at such a pace, and terrorising the Indians so effectively, that 'Poor as our Trade now is, it must still be poorer'. Longmoor, a sterling character and the earliest European servant of the Company to master the art of canoe-making, was ideally suited for this task. But he made a late start in 1778 and although he set off from Cumberland on 27th September 'to Settle above the Pedlars' Settlements, as far as Possible, if weather will permit', he was caught by ice in the river and by 22nd October had only reached the Pedlars' middle settlement. There were three opposition houses there, and Blondeau (whom he called Blondish) offered him the use of a half-finished house for the winter if he chose to stay there. The river being almost fast with ice, Longmoor had little choice. During the winter he found the Pedlars far less complaisant than their loan of a house would seem to indicate, and when Indians came in to trade in December the Pedlar Holmes caused an incident by setting up a guard on the river, with ten gallons of rum in a cask. The Indians were almost forced to stop and drink (they probably needed little persuasion!) and Holmes then proclaimed that all who drank their rum or took their tobacco were committed to trading with the Pedlars. Longmoor had but twelve men, the Pedlars were over a hundred strong, and it says much for his character that his protests were

noticed at all. He sent his men out in small parties to trade with the Indians *en dérouines* after the Canadian fashion and to persuade them to come in to trade at the Company's post. But the Indians were not so foolish as to lose the advantage which competition gave them by trading away from the posts, though they accepted presents of tobacco and promised to come down to trade. Brandy might have got them to 'trade out', but Longmoor thought that would be dangerous, especially since he was short of it and the Pedlars were so well-provided that they could afford to send off an expedition, to bring in Indians, equipped with twenty-five ten-gallon casks of rum.

By mid-April 1779 Longmoor was clean out of trade-goods of all kinds (he had been equipped with goods to the value of 2,406 Made-beaver), and though many Indians would certainly have preferred to trade with the English, they were driven to the Canadians. Both Longmoor and Philip Turnor, whose surveying expedition had brought him to this 'Upper Settlement' in March 1779, concluded that the Company had lost very considerable quantities of furs simply because of lack of goods and of men. Longmoor had traded only 185 *parchment* and 127½ pounds of *coat* beaver, with about six hundred wolves and a like number of foxes and a negligible assortment of small furs; which was a meagre enough contribution to the 5,000 Made-beaver brought down by Cumberland.

The English, however, were reasonably well-satisfied with their venture, especially as they reckoned that they had the support of the Indians. In the spring of 1779 the Indians had risen against the Canadians at their 'Upper Settlement' in the Eagle Hills and had murdered two of them. These were John Cole, the former servant of the Hudson's Bay Company who had gone back to his first masters, and one of Peter Pangman's men. The cause was general dissatisfaction with the bullying conduct of the Pedlars, and in particular the poisoning of an Indian who had been given laudanum in his grog the previous autumn. The Pedlars fled precipitately from their middle settlement, and while the masters advised Longmoor also to seek safety lower down the river their men threatened to kill the Hudson's Bay men in their flight. Longmoor, however, felt that he had more friends than enemies among the Indians; but though he refused flight he nevertheless thought it prudent to hurry his departure. The encouraging feature of the whole affair was the revelation that the Pedlars were not only alienating the Indians but also could place no reliance, in such a crisis, upon their French-Canadian servants.

Next year, 1779-80, Longmoor was again sent up from Cumber-

land, this time ahead of the Pedlars who were unwilling to venture too far after the troubles of the previous year. Accompanied by his chief, William Tomison, he at last built the long-planned outpost. The journey from York and the routine of the Hudson's Bay system entailed that, although Tomison and Longmoor were ahead of the Pedlars, they could not outdistance them, and Hudson House, as their new post was called, was in fact about fourteen miles lower down the Saskatchewan than the post which Longmoor had occupied in the previous winter. It was, however, very well situated for trade and once more the Company's men were provoked to report that only shortage of goods and men imposed limitations on the returns which could be got. Longmoor reckoned he had lost about sixteen thousand beaver, and Governor Humphrey Marten at York endorsed this and added that, with adequate transport by means of boats and a hundred men sent inland, he would venture his neck that Tomison and Longmoor would drive the returns from York up to fifty thousand beaver a year. Not only were the quantities of goods inadequate, but their poor quality also evoked severe strictures; weak tracking-lines which could set the canoes drifting back down the rapids and might well lose their cargoes, augers and hatchets which broke and held up building and impeded the cutting of firewood and the making of sledges, all added to the lack of kettles, guns, hatchets and brandy.

The opposition came in good time to take advantage of these defects—first Holmes in a light canoe, then Tute with nineteen men to build a hundred yards away from Hudson House. Holmes then brought up the canoes with trade-goods and spent the winter in opposition, bullying and cajoling the Indians and doing his best to frighten the Hudson's Bay men. He was reinforced from the Pedlars' Lower Settlement at Sturgeon River in the course of the winter, and in January he brought up thirty sledge-loads of goods from below with the purpose of going up to the Middle Settlement fourteen miles higher, where Longmoor had traded in the previous year. Holmes' 'saucy pride' made him a formidable opponent, though Tomison was only moved to tell him that 'Scotchmen can kill as well as Irishmen can'; but the Pedlars' influence was felt even when they were not present, for they had taught the Indians to insist upon presents and a scale of hospitality which impoverished the Hudson's Bay men, and they had also exasperated them to such an extent that at times it seemed dangerous to send men out with the Indians, to trade or to hunt provisions. Yet it was the best year for furs which Longmoor had ever heard of, and despite the difficulties

Hudson House traded over 3,000 Made-beaver by January 1780 and over 6,000 (together with 900 lbs. of pemmican) by May, a substantial portion of the total of 11,000 traded from Cumberland.

These were returns which warranted the effort, and Hudson House was a steady commitment from henceforth. But again the Pedlars' wild conduct almost wrecked the Company's trade. In the early summer of 1780 Longmoor had noted that the Canadians had refused to trade any guns, and he feared that provisions would be scarce in 1781. His expectation was more than fulfilled, for the Indians, jealous of their claim to supply the produce of the hunt, had burned the prairie round the furposts and so had scared the game out of reach of the white men. The policy was deliberate and its effect was increased by the lack of guns, for the Hudson's Bay men shared the Pedlars' reluctance to trade or to lend guns in the existing mood of the Indians. The result was that throughout the winter provisions were scarce, Longmoor had to put his men on short rations and had starving and sick Indians about him. They even tried to raid Hudson House and take what they wanted. But Longmoor seized the first gun presented and broke it, then disarmed the rest of their guns, knives and bayonets, 'And then as I had all their Arms I let them out'.

His account of the affair is a magnificent revelation of the courage, truculence and contemptuousness of the man: 'I think it is over, But I am all ready if it should happen, and every man here the same, for to defend our Masters property and our own lives, Wind at South', he concluded. Almost as remarkable as the fortitude shown by Longmoor was the fact that the Indians despite their penury never ceased to want brandy above all things in their trade. This Longmoor was but poorly supplied with, especially since he had twenty-two men to buy provisions for, and he had to get canoes built in the spring. He had to preserve his limited liquor to ensure these two important services. Yet, having beaten 'the French' on the way up (they were afraid to venture until they could come in force, and then they found their lower house completely burned-out), and having more men and a larger outfit than the previous year, he made a good trade and in 1781 contributed almost seven thousand Made-beaver to Cumberland's returns—about half the total from that post.

To some extent this further indication of the value of Hudson House was a tribute simply to Longmoor and to Tomison. Both complained of the ignorance and neglect of their superiors. Tomison wrote from Cumberland with some attempt at tact and, complaining that the inland servants were neglected, told Humphrey Marten in

conclusion 'Sir the above do not point at you'. Longmoor, however, was much more outspoken in his Journal. In words reminiscent of John Nixon and James Knight he complained that lack of men and goods was the only bar to improvement. 'Your Honour's is unacquainted in the Country, and none that is Master at the Principal Forts, is any Judge of Your Honours Settlements Inland only them that is in the place being'. The novitiate in inland trade had not yet been served in 1780, as can be judged from the note on the journey down with the furs, damaged in the canoes, 'had we Oilskin Covering we cou'd keep every furr dry'.

Tomison seems to have kept the rough side of his character for the Canadians, but Longmoor was too uncompromising to get his own men through a winter of hardship without provoking serious complaints. Though he noted in his own Journal that he had got through successfully and that 'as they saw it was necessary they never had any Reflections all the time', in fact his men signed a quaint and oddly-worded petition to Tomison, complaining of Longmoor's ill-temper, drunkenness and violence. They had hoped he might improve, but 'in pleas of Better it is wors' and he was always 'Noking pipeal about'. Tomison found that the men had certainly exaggerated their complaints of short allowances. But there can be little doubt that Longmoor had roused the ill-feeling of his men, and they refused to come inland and serve under him again.

Nevertheless Longmoor was kept in the forefront of the struggle against the Pedlars. He had foreseen an intensification of the struggle in 1781, expecting that the opposition would build a new outpost and that Hudson House would be overwhelmed. At York it was deemed that rivalry on the Saskatchewan was well forward and that the new threat came from the northwards, where Peter Pond had pushed from Beaver Lake and Methy Portage to Athabaska, to intercept some of the Athabaska trade which would normally find its way down to Churchill. So Cocking (Marten having gone home on account of ill-health) appointed Longmoor to winter with a small party on the upper Saskatchewan, to collect provisions and to prepare for an early start to the north in 1782. To replace him in command at Hudson House William Walker, a former apprentice of the Company, was sent with twenty-two men and a generous outfit. Walker proved more than competent, but he had roused a good deal of hostility among his fellows, perhaps because of his training and greater literacy, perhaps because he let it be known that he was under temptation from the Pedlars. He came in to a position in which provisions were scarce because the prairie 'nigh at hand' was still

burned and the Indians had underlined one of the basic problems of inland trade by insisting that they would trade no meat except for brandy. He was forced to send his men out to get their own food, to keep very few with him in the post, and ultimately to put them on short commons; and when Longmoor and his party of four men arrived at Hudson House 'to pass the time until the warm season returns' Walker sent him also out in search of buffalo.

When Tomison sent Walker off from Cumberland to Hudson House he noted that his medical equipment was very slight for such a party. It was perhaps a prophetic note, perhaps a reminder that the Journals which have come down to us are fair copies, written up after the event and sometimes containing latter-day wisdom. The winter was, in any case, to prove the weight of this statement, for a devastating small-pox epidemic among the Indians marked that year with a solemn emphasis. Small-pox, the 'Plaguey Disorder' almost unknown north of the Saskatchewan but working up from the south, probably from the Snake Indians and the Mississippi, appeared among the Indians at Cumberland early in December: the first case at Hudson House had been late in October, and Walker ascribed it to the ease and plentiful supplies of ammunition which the Canadians had brought to the Indians, so that they could more frequently go to war, and had in fact ventured against the Snakes.

Whatever its origins, the scourge revealed the inability of the Indians to resist European disease. While whole tribes were virtually wiped out, families were left in their tents to be mauled and devoured by wild beasts, and the few survivors were too scared and sickened to hunt either furs or provisions, or even to get firewood, the English were immune. Of all the men at Cumberland and Hudson House only the half-breed Charles Isham caught the disorder. He had perhaps inherited his Indian mother's susceptibility. But even he recovered.

The English, though lacking medicines, did what they could for the Indians. They fumigated with sulphur, but their immunity cannot have been due to this, for they gave the Indians attendance, buried them, were 'cut to the heart' at their sufferings, and went so far as to travel out to the desolated tents to collect their debts in furs from the corpses, even to the extent of sending out duffels to clothe the corpses, so that the Indians might pay their debt with the beaver robes in which they had died. With so much close contact the complete immunity of the English was astonishing—'there is something very malignant, that we are not sensible of, either in the Constitution of the Natives or in the Disorder', wrote Tomison.

Fully occupied to keep their houses warm and to bury the dead, the Hudson's Bay men pursued their trade with macabre devotion. They profited little. Cumberland lost over a thousand beaver which had been advanced in 'debt' to Indians who died, and the two inland posts shipped down only about 6,000 Made-beaver, leaving almost half as much inland owing to lack of Indians and of canoes. Longmoor was driven back from the plains, and the attempt to send him into Athabaska was postponed. There the Pedlars had a good start. The pestilence, too, prevented Walker from carrying out his determination to keep a tent higher up the river than 'the French'. But although the Pedlars had penetrated further, and had some sixty men at their 'Upper House', they had suffered as much as their rivals, and the English thought the troubles and lack of trade would sort out the opposition and reveal whether they were men of substance who could stand such a reverse.

So the most doleful tidings which had ever come from Hudson Bay had their element of hope and determination. Though the winter had revealed the persistent ineptitudes of the English and the Orkney men in the stories of cargoes spoiled for lack of canoe-coverings, or in the naïf revelation that the English were still clumsy hunters—'when Us Englishmen can murder a Chance One, if they (Indians) was to hunt with dexterity, they might keep themselves and Us too'—it had also shown their increasing confidence and competence. The Pedlars even accused them of stealing the Canadians' women! In the end the small-pox tragedy confirmed the Company's grip, for William Walker, greatly daring, took it upon himself for the first time to stay with some of his men inland at Hudson House through the summer months. His reason was that the Indians out on the plains had furs which they had not brought in to trade during the spring months and that it was essential that the furs should be traded and that the Indians should be equipped so as to hunt their way through the winter. It was a sound enough reason, and it gave to the Company's inland settlements a continuity and purpose which they had hitherto appeared to lack.

It was at this juncture, with Hudson House being kept open through the summer for the first time and with a fair prospect of recovery, in trade at least, from the small-pox disaster, that the French again (and for the last time) struck. By 1782 the outcome of the War of American Independence was virtually secured on the mainland; but for the French, as allies of the colonists, there remained opportunity for exploiting the naval situation so as to wrest from England some of the West Indian islands as well as the

mainland settlements. The Comte de Grasse had therefore led his fleet of thirty-one ships of the line in an attack on Jamaica. Dogged by Rodney, he had been brought to action on 12th April, and his fleet had been dispersed and annihilated at the brilliantly-fought Battle of the Saints. There remained, however, the nucleus of a valuable 'fleet in being' in the twenty-six French ships dispersed in ports of refuge after the battle, and they were soon joined by a Spanish squadron of eight. De Grasse's successor in command de Vaudreuil (for de Grasse had been captured at the Saints) dispersed this threatening concentration, and among other minor plans upon which he embarked was that of sending the 74-gun *Sceptre* and the two 36-gun frigates, *Astreé* and *Engageante*, under the command of the Comte de Lapérouse, to capture the English posts in the Bay.

This was not the inexplicable and irresponsible (if successful) affair for which it has sometimes been taken. It was the effective performance of a plan which had been accepted and worked out for at least two years. In 1780 plans for this secret expedition were first put forward in France, but they were delayed because the Americans pressed other objectives. Lapérouse himself put forward the plan in some detail in 1781, in such secrecy that the name of the country was not mentioned, but stressing the ease with which one great post (Fort Prince of Wales) and two lesser ones (York and Severn) might be captured, and the absolute necessity to embark before 10th June. It was emphasised that even if the posts should not be captured the French trade might be re-established, that with the Americans virtually independent the goods could be sold at Boston or at Philadelphia, and that the expedition could if necessary be diverted to Newfoundland or to commerce-raiding in the mouth of the St. Lawrence. But Lapérouse finished his spring cruise in 1781 too late to attempt the expedition (the Bay was named as such by now) and was included in the Jamaica expedition, and the Battle of the Saints, as captain of a frigate. So when he was given command of the *Sceptre* and of the two frigates it was all to him just the fulfilment of the mission which had been approved in the previous year.

The season was well advanced by the time Lapérouse had taken aboard two hundred and fifty troops and forty gunners who had originally been destined for Jamaica, and it was 8th August before he appeared at the mouth of Churchill River. The ships were wearing English colours, but by the time they had worked their way up the river and had landed men and guns on the peninsula on which stood the great stone Fort Prince of Wales, no further deception was possible. Samuel Hearne as Governor of Churchill came out to

parley, and then surrendered his fort 'without making any resistance'.

It might have been expected that the stone fort, on which so much time and money had been spent, and which had been built specifically to resist a sea-borne attack by Europeans, would at least have put up a fight. Its easy surrender has been ascribed in part to the inoffensive mildness of Hearne; the man who had allowed his Indian companions to abuse and rob him and who had been powerless to prevent the massacre of the Eskimos at Bloody Falls was not the best governor for the key-fortress of the Bay.

In part the surrender has been ascribed to the Company's policy and parsimony; men hired at the minimum wages merely to trade were not prepared to stand as soldiers in a siege when good terms of capitulation could be got. The enemies of the Company made much of the apathy revealed; it was later pilloried in particular by Edward Umfreville (who left the Company for the service of the Pedlars) in his *Present State of Hudson's Bay* and in two letters, probably from his hand, in the *Morning Chronicle* of April 1783. Probably the fault lay in leadership, for the Hudson's Bay men were proving their mettle at the Inland Settlements. Hearne was certainly outnumbered, though not so heavily as he thought; he thought that, with three men-of-war on one side of the post and six hundred regular troops landed on the other side, he had no option save surrender. The French claimed that they had landed only two hundred and fifty men; but even so the English were indeed outnumbered and the French, though greatly impressed with the strength of the stone-work, left no comment on the courage of Samuel Hearne as commander. Nor, in fact, did the Hudson's Bay Committee. Hearne had only thirty-nine men, some of whom were absent, and he could not even have manned his guns.

Once the surrender had been negotiated, apparently with no safeguards either for the liberty of the men or for the property of the Company, Hearne mingled with his captors and had good opportunity to describe their condition. Closely packed with soldiers and sailors, their ships were lousy (which probably meant ship's typhus), they were 'eat up with the Scurvey' from which they suffered two or three deaths a day, and their rations were 'about 2 ozs Beef or Pork a day or a few beans boiled in a little fresh water together with some maggoty biscuit almost cabable to walk itself and a dram of bad brandy at each meal'. They found the English post full of an infinite quantity of merchandise of all kinds, with magnificent cannon, magazines covered with lead, and even an observatory sent out by the Royal Society (a relic of William Wales).

Churchill was so substantially built that it could not be completely destroyed, though that was what Lapérouse attempted. He had brought no traders with him, and made no attempt to set up a French trade. Instead, he spiked the cannon and burned the gun-carriages, undermined the walls and blew great breaches in them, and set fire to the fort in five different places. Hearne seems to have been on the most friendly terms with the French. He discussed the Indians and their habits with them, and explained that he had sent his sloop mostly to Knapp's Bay and Marble Island, where it went to trade every year. But when the expedition moved off from Churchill to continue operations against York Fort the English prisoners who were taken aboard (including Hearne) refused to navigate for them, though once they had arrived in Hayes River they seem to have got one of the Company's servants to guide them. It was 20th August before Lapérouse got to Hayes River, and there he found an English sloop of twenty-six guns moored, at Five Fathom Hole, in the mouth of the Hayes River. This was the Company's ship *King George*, Captain Jonathan Fowler in command, which had come from England on 15th August, bringing trade-goods for the year and Humphrey Marten (who had spent a year in England) to take over command again from Matthew Cocking.

Lapérouse decided to sail up the Nelson rather than the Hayes River and to attack the post overland from the rear. He landed his cannon and mortars and two hundred and fifty troops (again the Hudson's Bay men were in fact easily out-numbered, and again they greatly exaggerated the odds) and spent three days in making an approach to the fort. They were days of violent storm, in which the French ships were in such danger that Lapérouse himself returned on board; two of his ships lost two anchors each and one of them, the *Engageante*, had also broken her tiller bar and only saved herself by dropping her sheet-anchor. It was 26th August before the wind dropped, and on 24th the English post surrendered at his first demand.

The wooden post at York was far less defensible than Churchill. But whereas Hearne had surrendered at discretion, Humphrey Marten was given terms of capitulation and the lives and private property of the English were guaranteed to them. Marten, moreover, saved the best part of his furs, for the *Severn* sloop was at hand with the returns from that post which, with most of the returns of York itself, and the Inland Settlements, were hastily slipped aboard the *King George*. Captain Jonathan Fowler 'took up . . . Anchor, &

made Sail for England' on the evening of 24th August, when it had become certain that the post was taken ; and when Lapérouse sent *L'Astrée* to capture the prize on the morning of the 25th the furs, and Matthew Cocking, were already on their way to London.

This must have been a great disappointment, though the French were at first more eager for the food than for the furs which they found at York. They had little time in which to recuperate and throw off their scurvy however, unless they were to take a chance between fighting their way out through the Strait or spending the winter in the Bay. They were in no shape for either, and on 1st September Lapérouse ordered all troops to re-embark within twenty-four hours. The wooden buildings were fired, and taking both Marten and Hearne with them the French set sail, with no cables or anchors to ride out a storm, on their voyage to Europe.

When eventually they made Cadiz, with four hundred sick aboard the *Sceptre* and after seventy deaths from scurvy on the voyage, it must have seemed the end of a most successful expedition. The crews were at the end of their tether, but that was not unusual at the end of a cruise in those days. Lapérouse estimated the loss to the Hudson's Bay Company at between ten and twelve million livres and was confident it would be forced to surrender its Charter ; so since the fur trade could only be managed by a company, the Bay trade would cease.

The commander of the *Engageante*, the Marquis de la Jaille, was less optimistic and more realistic. He quoted the English post-masters as estimating the loss at seven or eight million livres, but he followed them also in thinking that the Company, despite its losses, would keep going on the produce of the posts at the Bottom of the Bay and of the Inland Settlements at Cumberland and Hudson House. For the canoes had already come down to York before the French arrived, and the outfits had returned to the interior. Humphrey Marten therefore knew all about the small-pox, and that William Walker had stayed on through the summer at Hudson House and that William Tomison had gone back to Cumberland. Moreover de la Jaille appreciated, from his conversations with Hearne and with Marten, that the Indians were utterly dependent on their annual trade with the Europeans. It had become an absolute necessity to them, they had lost the art of hunting with the bow and arrow, and both Lapérouse and de la Jaille were touched at the thought of the way in which their raid (for it was no more, having no constructive purpose), would react on the natives. In fact, with all the desperate hurry in which they sacked York and took to their

ships, the French left a *cache* of lead and of powder just outside the post, to help the Indians through their troubles. And when on the way from Churchill to York the French ships sighted the *Prince Rupert* on her way to Churchill, Hearne was allowed to send a message to the English captain. The *Engageante*, who was sent in chase of the *Rupert*, never came up to her, but apparently Hearne's message was passed. It bade Captain Christopher give powder and shot to the Churchill Indians since, the post being destroyed, they would have to hunt their way to the Inland Settlements. Already the Churchill Indians had pleaded with the French that they would be left without powder or shot, and Lapérouse had supplied them.

So through the fall and winter of 1782 and the spring of 1783, while the great posts at York and Churchill lay empty and plundered, the Indians continued to hunt and to recover from the small-pox while the Company's Inland Settlements, not knowing of the disaster, continued their trade. The greatest damage, perhaps, was in loss of prestige. The immense stoneworks at Churchill had been surrendered, the cannon lay ruined and the buildings despoiled, in full sight of the Indians. Samuel Hearne and Humphrey Marten, each long known to the Indians and each in his way respected, had not dared resist and each had been carried off a prisoner. The chief Keelshies spread news of the disaster in the lands which fed the trade of Churchill, and the great and devoted chief Matonabee, who had accompanied Hearne on his journey to the mouth of the Coppermine, committed suicide at sight of the apparently complete defeat of his friends. In Indian fashion he was convinced that the French would drown Hearne and all the English when they got out to sea.

Hearne, in the meantime, was aboard the *Sceptre*, engaged in discussions with Lapérouse, who was so impressed with him that on reaching Europe he returned to Hearne the manuscript of the account of his journey to the Arctic on condition that he should publish it. Hearne's conduct on board seems to have been perfectly correct; and although Lapérouse's account says he gave a forty-ton boat to Hearne and Marten on condition that they took thirty-one Englishmen to England on their parole that a like number of French prisoners should be released, this was not so. Hearne and Marten were both carried to France, and there released when the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, while John Turnor, master of the *Severn* sloop, was given his sloop in return for his services in piloting the French out of the river and through Hudson Strait. He it was who brought the English hands across the Atlantic, and he made so good a voyage that he arrived at Stromness a few hours after the *King*

George and a quarter of an hour ahead of the *Prince Rupert*. It was a feat which underlined the basic superiority of the English, for while Turner could manage this in a small sloop, the French had no charts, no pilots, not a single sailor who had ever been in the Bay.

Lapérouse and his officers deserved the handsome rewards which they received, for their determination and endurance were beyond praise. Had their journey lasted a couple more days they could not have made harbour at Cadiz, so exhausted were their crews. Yet the Hudson's Bay Committee were neither aghast at their losses (and they reckoned that the furs captured at Churchill alone were worth £14,580) nor enraged with their Governors. They accepted the destruction as the probable result of an attack by a concentrated national expedition upon the dispersed outposts of a trading corporation. However much the Company's opponents might complain of the conduct of Hearne and of Marten, the Committee recorded no word of criticism. On their return to England each was re-appointed to his post and was sent out in the ships of 1783 to re-establish the Company's trade.

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CHAPTER IV

RIVALRY, AND EXPANSION TO THE SOUTH, AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BAY, 1763-1783

In the dangers resulting from the small-pox epidemic of 1781 and the French raid of 1782, York Fort and its Inland Settlements seemed under the gravest threat. The men left inland seem to have been left entirely to their own resources, deserted without supplies in a barren land. Yet Churchill and its hinterland received as much attention as York, and in its own way the Bottom of the Bay also deserved the utmost care and attention.

The combinations of the Pedlars were intent upon the trade of the north-west, and during these years they were working their way towards a financial system and methods of control which would enable them to transfer the starting-point of their outfits from Michilimackinac to Grand Portage and thence to the Upper Saskatchewan, and so would enable their men to drain away the trade, first of the Saskatchewan and then of Athabaska. It was the irruption of the Pedlars into Athabaska which made Churchill the focal point of the fur trade rivalry in the 1780's, and indeed for the next half-century; for the trade of Churchill, with all its slooping voyages to the north, came mainly by way of Churchill River from Athabaska.

But although Athabaska was developing into the furthest frontier of the struggle, the intermediate points were still productive and important; and this applied no less to Moose, Albany, Henley and the Eastmain at the Bottom of the Bay, than to York, Severn, Cumberland and Hudson House. The organisation of the Pedlars was at all stages of development, ranging from the individual efforts of single men with two canoes up to the great combination which called itself the North West Company. So the Hudson's Bay men met rivalry throughout the range of travel and outlay which such varying arrangements made possible—from Athabaska which required organisation and outlay for a two-years' expedition, to Lake Abitibi where the outfit could trade and disperse in the five summer months.

While Churchill and the Athabaska trade met the rising weight of the great combinations (and to some extent made those combinations necessary) Moose and Albany still had to compete with the petty

traders from Quebec, as they had done since the fur trade was first thrown open, before the Pedlars had begun to venture to the Saskatchewan. By 1766 Moose had begun to feel the rivalry of 'certain English' at Abitibi Lake, up the 'Nodway River', and 'on the back of' the post. From the start the result was evident in the increasing independence of the Indians, their bidding up of prices (especially for martens) and their demands for more credit.

For such rivalry the only answer was the establishment of inland posts. The Indians were liable to spend as much as two months on the journey to Albany and back to their hunting-grounds; they had to consume powder and shot, and provisions, on the journey and to maintain their families in the meantime. They regarded the Company's requirement that they should come to the Bay to trade as 'a deceit', and naturally and inevitably they traded inland with the Pedlars. Despite the massacres of 1755 and 1760, and despite Indian warning that the post would be destroyed again at the first opportunity, Henley House was re-established to meet this situation in 1765. But Henley House provided no easy solution for Humphrey Marten, as Master at Albany. Called home from the small outpost at Severn River in 1761, he had then been elected to command at York on the death of Isham, only to be superseded by Ferdinand Jacobs and again called home in 1762. He tried hard to think how he might have offended, and he secured appointment in 1763, first to keep the accounts and then to be second at Albany. On the death of his chief, Robert Temple, in 1764 he was given the post, but he was still under some sort of a cloud, and unsure of his authority. His appointment was only for a year (and he was not fully confirmed until 1766), he suffered from so sore a throat that he feared he had cancer, and he found (or suspected) that his surgeon and other officers had turned the Indians against him and warned them not to come to Albany to trade. Moreover, the Indians had just committed a particularly revolting massacre of a party of four French and three English Pedlars and were parading about the post with the scalps of their victims, trying to trade the goods which they had pillaged and demanding brandy for which they refused to pay. This was the almost inevitable result of competition in the fur trade, as waged by the Pedlars; but it faced Humphrey Marten with a quandary. While the Indians declared that they never would allow their country to be stolen from them and demanded rewards for killing the Company's enemies, the servants ordered inland protested strongly—'how can you ask us to go said they, when you see how Bloody minded the Indians are'.

Having failed to persuade his men to go inland in 1764, Marten got a party off in 1765. The rivers proved too shoal, and so the establishment of Henley was delayed until 1766. It brought in its train the further problem of the extent to which it should actually trade furs, or should merely supply the Indians for their journey down to Albany. It was a troublesome commitment, and the adoption of boats instead of canoes to get the goods inland, while undoubtedly of pioneer importance in the history of transportation, was only half an answer to the Company's problem. For although boats carried more freight, and were manageable by the Company's servants, they required shipwrights to make and mend them, they were so heavy that special gangs of men had to be sent part of the way to Henley so as to help the boats over the falls, they needed a depth of water which could not always be found, and if at all seriously damaged they had to be sent back to Albany for repairs. This was the background of experience which led the Committee to decide that when a post should be established inland from York Fort it must be maintained by canoes, not boats, because of their lightness and the ease with which they could be repaired.

Always liable to Indian attacks, and a constant prey to rumours, Henley House was completed in 1768—'in Spite of the most inveterate malice and Envy of your Honors most undutifull Servants and my Enemies Pray God Turn their Hearts and forgive them Amen'. It raised, as all inland posts raised, the question of private trade and private trapping in an acute form, for greater licence was certain to prevail away from the supervision of a Chief and an accountant; and it raised the problem of competition between different posts. It was almost bound to debauch the Indians, as well as giving to them the advantages of competition between their customers. 'Brandy Brandy is the Cry' wrote Humphrey Marten, 'and very sure I am that since Henley House has been established I have had three times the trouble with the natives than before'. Yet Henley House was an effective check to the Pedlars, it encouraged the Indians to resist their high-handed methods of trade, and at times to retaliate, and by 1773 even Humphrey Marten was putting a case for expanding it into a major post.

The Committee disagreed, and went so far as to discuss its abandonment; but Henley remained, an outpost towards Canada. It was, moreover, an outpost from which further expansion was almost inevitable. The difficult and dubious policy of maintaining inland posts simply as a means of helping the Indians on their journeys to the forts at the Bay could not be enforced on the Saskatchewan, and

when from 1775 onwards it was frankly accepted that Cumberland, and later Hudson House, should be maintained as full trading establishments, the same policy was applied at the Bottom of the Bay. Only so could the posts be maintained, and only by advancing against the Pedlars could their encroachments be repelled.

So in 1775 Edward Jarvis set off from Henley, up the easterly branch of Albany River to the Missinaibi and so down to Moose. Next year he again set off from Henley, and this time penetrated to Michipicoten on Lake Superior, to visit the Pedlars in their own fortress. It was a journey carried out by this active young man (a surgeon) despite Indian opposition; for 'the Indians whose Country lies between the Canadians and us, are averse to our making any discovery or Settlement where the Pedlars are, because they find it more beneficial to have two places of opposite interests to resort to'. Jarvis was not at all impressed with the Pedlars' posts at Michipicoten (one of which belonged to Alexander Henry and was run for him by Joseph le Maire). He found the buildings mere log huts, the masters at enmity, and the trade-goods poor and shoddy. Though the hardships he had suffered led him to refuse further inland travel for himself, he was convinced that Henley ought to be more fully developed, and that it could seriously interrupt the Pedlars' trade as far afield as Michipicoten.

Jarvis's views of the correct use of Henley House, as a spring-board from which further advances into the Pedlars' territory should start, were put into effect in 1777 when Gloucester House was established two hundred and thirty-four miles above Henley. It was well placed for challenging the Pedlars, but it involved serious transportation problems for, as Turnor noted, by contrast with the problems of penetration inland from York, the Indians 'towards Quebec' would not build large canoes, and the country would not provide provisions. So all provisions had to be taken inland in small canoes.

But though Gloucester House marked the adoption of this 'forward' policy, it met skilled opposition. For however vulnerable and, in some ways, mismanaged the Pedlars' trade may have been, it was yet capable of exploiting the weakness of the Company's system to an extent which produced a steady decline in the returns from the Bottom of the Bay, and the early verdict that 'In a few Years the English will hurt the trade at Moose Fort more than ever the French did' seemed likely to be fulfilled. On top of the results of a competition which entailed feeding the Indians, promising them remission of debts, and spurring them on to hunt beaver, came

sickness and bad winters and a certain amount of rivalry between the Hudson's Bay posts themselves.

The danger was clear, but there was no other answer to the Pedlars' rivalry. By 1770 the Committee had asked for details of the Pedlars' posts at Abitibi and suggested exploration, and detailed reports of the geography and routes of the interior. It was therefore in tune with general policy that Gloucester House should have been established beyond Henley, that Jarvis should have made his journey to Lake Superior, and that the London Committee should have instructed the Chiefs at Moose and Albany to combine their efforts in order to set up a post on Lake Superior. The developing technique of the London fur and felting industries was revealing a market for the coarser beaver skins taken around Lake Superior, and the Hudson's Bay men were anxious to move in on the market in London, which the Pedlars had so far enjoyed. Their decision to set up posts towards Lake Superior must, therefore, not be construed as merely a defensive move. They hoped to expand their trade in a commodity which they had hitherto touched but little.

Thomas Hutchins, Chief at Albany, and Eusebius Bacchus Kitchin, Chief at Moose, therefore met at Albany in September 1776, and in conformity with their instructions from the Committee set forth the expedition of October 1776 under Thomas Atkinson (a surgeon, like Kitchin himself, and Jarvis) which established a half-way post towards Lake Superior. After wintering in a log-tent, Atkinson built Wapiscogamy House (later called Brunswick House) in the summer of 1777, on the bank of Missinaibi River, the great west branch of Moose River. Badly designed, badly built, and badly sited for defence, the post was nevertheless well placed for its purpose, and no better spot could be found for the new buildings which were erected in 1781, and which stood as Brunswick House until a more favourable position at New Brunswick on Brunswick Lake was accepted, and the early post was abandoned in 1791.

Wapiscogamy, though agreed on by the Chiefs of Albany and of Moose, was subordinate to, and outfitted from, Moose. So were the other moves 'towards Quebec' of these days. The Chief at Moose, under whom these moves were organised, was yet another surgeon. Any reader of Smollet will appreciate that a surgeon in the eighteenth century was normally far different from the highly educated product of the medical schools whom the twentieth century would recognise as such. The surgeon, little removed from the barber-surgeon from whom he had descended, would take his qualification from Surgeons'

Hall and would be the sort of partly-educated, forthright, servant of whom the Company was so much in need. Certainly the surgeons of these days played a very full part in the expansion of the Company into the interior. Eusebius Kitchin, however, was not remarkable for his scholarly attainments or leanings. When he offered to stay on at Moose in 1762 he had told the Committee (who wanted to collect specimens) that he would send plants home but that he never would pretend to be any great professor in botany; and when he suggested himself for the mastership of that post he protested that 'Arithmetick is a thing I will not go to undertake knowing'. He thought that character, and knowledge of Indians, should be more important than accountancy, and he was outspokenly angry at being refused the command and called home. Next year he went out again, as surgeon and second-in-command at Albany, and he did not get back to Moose again until 1771, still as surgeon and second-in-command. He travelled between the posts to attend casualties, at times suffering snow-blindness and ice-burn himself in the journey, and by the time he stepped into the Mastership at Moose, in 1772 on the death of John Garbutt, he was an experienced and forceful Indian trader, knowing the dialects, determined to stop private trade and other abuses, and to resurrect the trade of Moose.

Kitchin's notion of his own worth was fantastic, and fantastically expressed, and he soon protested against being both Chief and Surgeon, and at the smallness of his pay and allowances. But he had great qualities and he was imbued with the need to explore to the south, and in particular to counteract the Pedlars' post at south-west Abitibi, two hundred and fifty miles from Moose, and at Woopachewon (on Abitibi River) five days' journey to the south. He thought a post up South River, or French Creek, would prevent encroachment from the 'Quebec Runnagates', and he thought the Company must be prepared to humour the Indians, to keep what trade they had. So when the Committee in 1773 wrote that they were particularly anxious for knowledge of the territory round Moose, and that they wanted exact surveys of the distances at which the Pedlars lay inland, coupled with the utmost efforts to get Indians down to trade from Abitibi, with a hint that communications should be opened up with the 'Nodway' River, the able but eccentric Chief of Moose was of one mind with them.

Expeditions by sloop and canoe had been sent to the Nottaway in 1772 and again in 1773, and when further expansion from Brunswick (which was never intended to be more than a half-way house to Michipicoten) was called for, Kitchin was again a firm supporter.

For in 1774 Kitchin sent John Thomas with two canoes of Indians to explore Abitibi River, and he attributed an increase in the returns of Moose in that year entirely to the trade brought down from Abitibi, carefully emphasising that none of the increase was due to encroachment on the trade of Albany.

Thomas, later to be Governor at Moose and to sire a line of Red River settlers, proved a very competent inland traveller. But although he was ordered to push on from Brunswick House in 1777, and to settle at Lake Superior, he got no further than Lake Missinaibi. He set up log tents there, but could get no food from the Indians and was driven back to Brunswick-Wapiscogamy during the winter. Again in 1778 it became clear that the Indians would not bring provisions to Missinaibi, and although some sort of outpost was maintained there it entailed carrying in quantities of food, and in 1780 Indian hostility compelled the abandonment of the post, which the Indians then burned.

Kitchin had by then been withdrawn from command at Moose, in 1779. He criticised Thomas severely for the price which he put on his services and for not spending more of his time at Missinaibi. Brunswick-Wapiscogamy therefore remained the furthest effective outpost towards Quebec, despite Kitchin's urgings; and his plans to settle towards Abitibi also remained unfulfilled. His successor Edward Jarvis, the surgeon who had travelled inland to Michipicoten, was as eager as Kitchin to rival the Pedlars at Abitibi, but the ruinous condition of the buildings at Moose demanded his first attention. Henry Pollexfen, Junior, had completed the building of a new house there in 1762; but already by 1763 his successor in command, John Favell, was complaining of the amount of care and maintenance which Pollexfen's building required, and the shoddy state of the factory held up any move towards Abitibi until Philip Turnor brought a new impetus, and achieved the foundation of Frederick House.

As the fifty-years' struggle with the Pedlars of Canada got into its stride, the force of character and personality seemed to be almost entirely on the side of the Pedlars. Among the serving men the dour Orkneymen upon whom the Company increasingly relied, recruited at low wages in the teeth of a press-gang hard at work to keep the Royal Navy properly manned in times of almost continuous war, seemed to compare most unfavourably with the French-Canadian *voyageur*. Certainly the Orcadian was not easily at home in a canoe, and he was paid to trade and not to fight. He could fish, but he took time to learn how to hunt and to get on intimate terms with the

Indians. But he had great qualities of endurance and loyalty, as those who settled Cumberland and Hudson House showed. The Pedlars well knew the value of such servants, and were often at pains to gain their services.

The leaders revealed a similar contrast. Against the determined, audacious, and often unscrupulous characters of Alexander Henry, Finlay, the Frobishers, Booty Graves, Peter Pangman, Captain Holmes, Peter Pond, with Simon McTavish, John Gregory, Angus Shaw, Roderick and Alexander Mackenzie, and the McGillivrays coming up behind them, the Hudson's Bay men seemed quiet and innocuous. True, there was the colourful half-breed Moses Norton in command at Churchill. But for the most part the Hudson's Bay leaders were in the tradition of John Nixon and James Isham—shrewd, and sometimes tart in their rejoinders; painstaking but not always accurate accountants; on the whole easygoing but sometimes erupting into a fury of disciplinary flogging; courageous in many ways but quite lacking in bravado. Samuel Hearne epitomises many of their stronger and their weaker qualities, with his acquiescence in Indian malpractices and his surrender to Lapérouse balanced against his great journey to the Coppermine and his establishment of Cumberland House. These men too had an elusive but vital contribution to offer; and the Pedlars well knew that with the dour courage of some of the Hudson's Bay men they would add greatly to their own strength.

The Committee in London during these years were constantly recruiting to get better-trained and more inspiring leaders, and Hearne himself was a result of a venture into the ranks of naval officers. The surgeons, too, were different in character, as in training, from the normal promoted labourer or writer upon whom the Company had to call; and as the Committee reluctantly accepted the fact that the struggle with the Pedlars would have to be fought out up the rivers 'on the back' of the Company's posts, surveyors to give knowledge of the problems also attracted the Committee.

A desire to know the facts of the Company's far-flung domain was by no means new in the Committee. The ships' captains had always been pressed to survey the coast as they went, Brian Norbury had been sent out to Governor John Nixon in order that he might make 'landskips', Captain Middleton's capacity as a surveyor was one of his greatest assets, the disgruntled mason Joseph Robson had borne the title of 'Mason and Surveyor', and Henday had been taught the rudiments of surveying in his journey with the measuring wheel inland from York. But the mounting rivalry with the Pedlars gave a

new urgency to the problem. Apprentices who could make surveys were taken from the Grey Coat Hospital in London, and in 1778 the Secretary of the Company turned to Christ's Hospital in search of surveyors, as the Company had turned at an earlier date in search of apprentices and writers. William Wales, the astronomer who had spent the winter of 1768-9 at Churchill to observe the transit of Venus (the same occasion as sent Captain Cook to Tahiti) was in 1778 teaching mathematics at Christ's Hospital, and to him the offer of three posts as 'Inland Surveyors' at £50 a year, with prospects of advancement and of gratuities, must have seemed a good opening for his pupils.

Wales' first recommendation, however, was not a Christ's Hospital boy. Philip Turnor was twenty-six years old in 1778, when he became the Company's first whole-time surveyor, recommended by Wales as 'a Person skilled in Mathematics'—for which Wales received a present of five guineas' worth of books. Landing at York Factory in 1778, Turnor found that his first task was to go inland to the Saskatchewan, to ascertain and describe the position of Cumberland House and then to continue upstream and do the same at the newly-established Hudson House. He first made a survey and drew a plan of York Fort, then he set off for Cumberland with a most authoritative note to William Tomison, who was told to give him all facilities regardless of cost, and to try to send him, at the conclusion of his work on the Saskatchewan, to Albany and Moose 'thro the Lakes inland' if it should prove practicable.

Turnor arrived at Cumberland on 11th October, 1778, having lost one canoe on the way. He spent the winter with Tomison at Cumberland and in spring marched on the ice almost three hundred miles to Hudson House, where he arrived just at the time when the Pedlars at the Upper Settlement were being driven back down the river by the Indians' anger at the killing of one of their number by a dose of laudanum in his grog. The incident prevented Turnor from going on up the river to ascertain the site of the Upper Settlement. But he surveyed Pine Island Lake on his return to Cumberland, and in summer 1779 he returned back to York Fort.

There followed a coastal journey to Severn and then to Moose in the *Severn* sloop (of which his brother John was captain). Turnor was being inured rapidly to the hardships of travel, first by canoe, then on foot, and then by sloop along the inhospitable shore of the Bay. And he walked to Albany after a couple of months spent at Moose, and when spring came he tramped on snow-shoes to Henley House. This was a journey of less than a hundred and fifty

miles; it took eleven days and it proved too much for Turnor, who suffered snow-blindness on the way. Two hundred and thirty-four miles further on lay the new little outpost of Gloucester House. But Turnor had travelled too much in his first year and could not walk there, as he had intended. He rested at Henley and then returned to Albany and, although he had with him John Hodgson, a Grey Coat apprentice who was also a good surveyor, he left no survey of this journey. He meant, however, to return, and when June and July brought open water in the rivers he made the same journey again, to Henley and then to Gloucester, carefully surveying on his return journey.

Early in 1781, after a land-journey from Moose to Albany and back, Turnor started out to survey the south and south-east shores of James Bay, visiting the posts at Rupert and Eastmain and getting back to Moose again in March. Then, a knowledgeable and experienced traveller with an over-all vision of the Company's problems, he started in a canoe up Moose River for Wapiscogamy House while the supplies for the post went by boat; and from Wapiscogamy he went on (as Jarvis had done) to Michipicoten, making a survey of the route on the return journey all the way from Michipicoten to Moose.

This feat he followed up, after only a fortnight's rest at Moose, by an attempt to reach the Pedlars' post on Lake Abitibi. He failed because he took a route by French Creek instead of by Abitibi River, and there was too little water in the creek even for a canoe. But in his first three-year period of service in the Bay Turnor had without any doubt acquired a wider and more accurate knowledge of the land and its routes than any servant of the English company had ever possessed, and his skill enabled him to put that knowledge into a form in which the Committee could use it as a basis for discussion and planning. This was an invaluable service.

It is not clear where Turnor was posted during the small-pox epidemic of 1781 and the French invasion of 1782—probably he was at work in and around Moose and Albany, for he renewed his contract in 1781, and he escaped capture by the French. With so much effort going into the English thrust towards Lake Superior, Turnor must have been in the midst of it and he, like the rest of the Company, met a serious reversal when the key outpost at Henley was destroyed by fire in January 1782. The news reached Moose soon enough, for in March Turnor was busy drawing plans for a new post; but it travelled slowly round the shores of the Bay, for Hearne and Marten only heard of it as they were aboard the Frenchmen, being taken out to Europe as prisoners.

Turnor did not himself conduct the party which built the post he had designed for Henley. He was engaged in another attempt to reconnoitre Abitibi Lake, this time by way of Abitibi River. His effort ended in June 1782, when his canoe was swamped and he lost his sextant. With two new quadrants sent up from Moose he again set forth, and this time he penetrated, and mapped, the route to the Pedlars' settlement at Abitibi. This completed the survey work required of him, and Turnor lost something of his special status and was incorporated into the more ordinary business of fur-trading. He was, however, kept in the frontier posts, and he was Master at Wapiscogamy, rebuilding it and re-naming it Brunswick House, when in March 1783 he heard of Lapérouse's destruction of York and Churchill.

While expansion southwards and south-westwards from the Bottom of the Bay went along with the Company's development on the Saskatchewan and northwards from Cumberland House, the Eastmain was not neglected, for the Eastmain also felt the force of the Pedlars' opposition. The early policy of keeping the Company's post in Slude River manned only by the sloop and its crew meant that the post would be deserted while the sloop made its voyages to and from Albany, and in 1770 a permanent complement of at least four men was begun. The sloop and its crew increased the strength of the post during trade-time, and the rebuilding of the post set up on the south bank of the river in 1739, together with the new régime, gave hopes of an improvement on the recently declining returns from Eastmain.

With care and attention, the Eastmain trade prospered and reached the figure of 2351 Made-beaver in 1772-3. This was partly due to the fact that an armourer had been posted there to repair the Indians' guns, a facility which brought much trade; partly it was ascribed to the care of a new master, George Atkinson, a promoted sailor whose career was closely linked with development at Eastmain. He was a quiet and responsible man, sympathetic to and accepted by the Indians, and with an Indian 'wife' and half-breed family. Atkinson was only in temporary command in 1772-3, and was designed to go inland from Eastmain as far as the nearest Pedlars' post in the following year. But lack of Indians prevented the expedition, and although he was nominated for a second abortive exploration inland in 1776 Atkinson remained a slooper until he was made Master of Eastmain again in 1778.

While Atkinson was unable to take an expedition inland from Eastmain, the rivalry of the Pedlars was severely felt there. They

had a post about a hundred and forty miles up Rupert River, and they interfered actively, sometimes forcibly, with Indians coming down to Eastmain or Moose. The Indians, in any case, dreaded the journey along-shore from the mouth of Rupert River to the post, and in 1775 and again in 1776 there were projects for exploration of the River and for setting up an outpost from Eastmain there. Eastmain however was a subsidiary from Albany, and a further outpost at Rupert River would therefore return its trade to, and have its policy ordered by, Albany. It is not surprising that Eusebius Kitchin should have protested from Moose that a Rupert River post would be 'in the heart of our Goose Marsh' and would interfere with his goose hunts. So when Rupert River was surveyed in 1776 and it was decided that a log tent, and ultimately a post, should be set up on the site of Gillam's old fort, Kitchin renewed his protests. He argued for his trade as well as for his provisions, and he urged that it would be more to the purpose if they penetrated inland to rival the Pedlars rather than that Moose and Albany should manoeuvre and set up posts in rivalry for the trade of a few Home Guard Indians. In 1779 his protests were rewarded and both Rupert River and Eastmain were taken from Albany and placed under Moose.

Rupert River was indeed a small outpost, normally of only two men, while Eastmain required six, and the new sloop *Beaver* required ten at least. The trade from Eastmain, however, had risen to over five thousand Made-beaver by 1780, and the complement was raised to sixteen men. Despite the fact that Pedlars were within a day's paddle of Eastmain, Atkinson slowly increased the returns there, getting in strange Indians from Richmond and from Mistassini Lake. He had outgrown the small houses which he had taken over, and by 1784 had built a new post, defensible and roomy; and in 1786 when he was on sick-leave in England (for he suffered from gout, gravel and scurvy) the Committee decided that the prospects of further development at Eastmain warranted its being made a separate establishment, on a par with Moose and Albany. With a strength of twenty-eight men including the sloop's crew, Atkinson was able to justify this decision. With a further year's leave for sickness in 1791, he held command at Eastmain, with Rupert River as a subsidiary, until his death in September 1792, and though the early proposals for expansion inland from Eastmain were not fulfilled, his influence with the Indians was such that he left the Company's trade there in a far healthier state than he found it. Rupert River was but a small house, yet the influence of the Company spread far inland, and with the Brunswick and Frederick House posts lying on

the flank of an approach from Canada, Atkinson's posts more than held the Pedlars at bay.

The Bottom of the Bay therefore, despite the burning of Henley, was carrying the trade rivalry into the Pedlars' own country. The traders there had troubles with health, discipline, private trade, rivalry between their own posts, inability to travel inland, and with idle and debauched Indians. All of these problems constantly recur in the letters and journals of the time. The need to master the problems of surveying, and of inland travel both on snow-shoes and by canoe or boat, stands out clearly; and the Company's servants proved themselves competent at the Bottom of the Bay as on the Saskatchewan during these years. Less easily overcome were the problems of private trading and of provision-hunting.

The ships' captains proved to be the core of the private trade, now as always. Though illicit brandy and immoderate drinking at York Fort had earlier been decried as the source of private trade, yet by 1771 attention was focused on the Bottom of the Bay, where there was a manifest 'propensity for clandestine proceedings', and where much more brandy was consumed than at the northern posts. The London customs-officers had seized a large quantity of illicit furs, aboard the *Seahorse* from Moose and Albany, in 1769, and the captain had then been discharged. But further seizures were made in the following year, and the Committee saw private trade as a menace to the very existence of the Company. For the jealousy and suspicion it caused at the posts were almost as bad as the dissensions among the Pedlars, and much of the trouble came from the 'Overplus system' whereby the traders gave short measure and cheated the Indians, who were driven away to the Pedlars by the 'sleight of hand' practised on them.

The Committee were sensible enough to recognise that a revision in salary scales would probably help, for it was clear that 'some of our Servants of the Superior Class and in whom Our Confidence was placed' were involved. So the system which had been introduced in James Knight's time, whereby men were allowed the produce of their private trapping, was abolished as a possible source of abuse, Chiefs' salaries were raised to £130 a year, ships' captains were given £12 a month and £100 gratuity with extra allowances in lieu of their customary 'presents', seconds, sloop-masters, mates and second-mates, surgeons and traders were also raised; and Chiefs were given bounties of three shillings and captains of one shilling and sixpence on every score of beaver traded. The bounty was to be forfeited for any share in clandestine shipments, and since in 1770-1 it amounted

to £86 for each captain and twice that sum for each Chief it should have acted as a considerable deterrent.

A system had developed in which the produce by private trapping of the posts was pooled and then divided out among all the officers and men. It dealt very largely with the martens which the Company was so anxious to trade, and it took these skins out of the Company's control to hand them over to the ships' captains for clandestine disposal, often in Holland. The captains made much of their difficulties, took the furs at less and less prices and so forced servants and officers alike to trade more and more skins to get the tobacco, clothes and liquor, which the captains provided by way of an openly-connived trade. This was a far cry from the original intention of encouraging the men to trap and travel instead of loafing through the winter at the posts, and some change was needed. It was possible that the change might prove discouraging, but the Committee modified the veto only to the extent of giving the men an extra allowance of clothing and encouraging them to trap near the posts.

The changes certainly did not completely eradicate private trade, but they won the officers to the Committee's side by the incentives offered. So much was this the case that Humphrey Marten in 1773 put one of his men in irons and gave him eighteen strokes of the cat for trading one skin. The Indian who had traded was induced to confess by a 'pot of Bumbo'. Such savage punishment was out of all proportion. But Marten was acting by the advice of his Council, and the chief conclusion to be derived from the incident is that the Council had been won over and was determined, by so fierce an example, to stamp out private trade. For the rest it should be borne in mind that this was an age of savage punishments, of hanging and transportation for sheep-stealing, and that the officers were convinced that their business could not be conducted without such practices. 'Had they been guilty of such crimes in Great Britain, or on board one of His Majesty's Ships of war, they would have got their just reward', wrote Andrew Graham in defence of flogging.

Too gloomy a picture of the conditions of service should not, in any case, be adopted. Food was usually plentiful—'if any person could eat more, he got more'—diversions occurred at set intervals, and the men were left much to themselves. The fifth of November was celebrated, as ever, with Protestant enthusiasm, with toasts to 'confusion of the enemies of the Established Church, healths to the King, the Royal Family, the Company', and 'success to Trade and Navigation'. Games were occasionally organised on the ice, and the

fall and spring goose and partridge hunts, with expeditions to cut wood, or hay for the cattle, and to take messages or small consignments of goods to other posts, offered not unreasonable relief from the monotony of life in the posts. One fact stands out—very seldom indeed was there need to punish men for offences against their fellows. They created much of their own difficulties—as when Eusebius Kitchin found a man quite overcome by ‘the filthy stink made by the Lamps joyned with those made by roasting and Dressing fish and other food in the Stove’. But only very rarely do they seem to have quarrelled among themselves and still more rarely did they behave badly to each other. There were such occasions at Moose in 1767 when two men broke open a comrade’s locker and stole six quarts of brandy, and there had been a couple of similar occasions previously. But on the whole the servants seem to have been very tolerant and friendly among themselves. Clashes of character, habits and opinions, there must have been; but the good sense and mutual tolerance of the majority of the servants triumphed.

The Bottom of the Bay was in good heart as the Company faced its crisis in 1783. It cheered the Governor and Committee immensely to know that when the news of the French success at York and at Churchill came to Albany, in February 1783, a representative council was called, including the Chief from Moose and the Master from Henley, and decided to arm and discipline the men and to put Albany in the best possible state of defence. The men were to be put into uniform, to give them a sense of discipline and emulation, and the council felt confident of defending Albany and of inspiring the Indians with determination. But the decision to defend Albany entailed a decision to abandon all of the outposts at the Bottom of the Bay. Henley had in any case been burned and was to have been rebuilt; the lack of a post at Henley seemed to render Gloucester House untenable. At Eastmain the old custom of withdrawing all the men as the sloop took the returns to Moose was revived, the log-hut at Rupert River was ruled out, Brunswick House was closed down and everything of value was taken to Moose, and even the *Beaver* sloop had her crew taken and was carefully hidden away.

So although Moose and Albany were indeed firmly held, and the display of spirit at the Bottom of the Bay was most encouraging, when the War of American Independence came to an end at the Treaty of Versailles in September 1783 the Committee had to reconstruct the pattern of its trade in the ‘Petit Nord’ on the back of Moose and Albany, as in the ‘Grand North’ behind York and

Severn; for a promising movement of expansion had been thrown out of gear by the French intervention.

For the Bottom of the Bay, the Committee decided on establishments not only for Moose and Albany (the two posts which were actually in existence) but also for Henley, Gloucester, Eastmain, Brunswick and Abitibi, and allotted a hundred and sixteen men to the 'Petit Nord'. For this expanding area much attention was devoted to transportation. Henley was to be re-established, and Gloucester House beyond it, and further posts beyond that; and since Turnor had commented unfavourably on the method of getting goods and provisions up to Gloucester his suggestions were put in hand, the complement of Gloucester was increased to twelve men (he had suggested eight) and a shuttle service of boats between Albany, Henley and Gloucester, was ordered under the supervision of a newly-appointed Superintendent of Boats. Henley was in effect to become a 'store house' for Gloucester. The Company, notwithstanding its reverses, had decided to move its frontier forward with purpose.

The Committee had also decided in 1783 that a post, based upon Moose, towards Abitibi was to be established under Turnor. Turnor had in fact been prevented by gout and rheumatism from abandoning Brunswick, where he was Master, in March 1783 when the news of the French depredations first came through. He did not close down his post and take furs and goods down to Moose until June; and by August it was known in the Bay that hostilities had ceased and that any further French inroads were unlikely. Thoughts at Moose, therefore, turned to the re-establishment of Brunswick, so recently abandoned, and since the *Seahorse* arrived late in 1783, with the orders for him to go towards Abitibi, Turnor had already gone back to Brunswick, to find everything as he had left it, and to resume the flow of trade. The decision to continue with Brunswick House was agreeable to the Committee, though when the Instructions for Moose arrived it became clear that the Committee, while determined to continue Brunswick, were by no means convinced of its value and wished no more goods to be sent there until a report had been made and considered.

Eastmain was given the increased complement of eighteen men—a factor which contributed to the need for the post to be rebuilt—and was placed, with the *Beaver* sloop and Rupert River, under the command of Moose.

With due emphasis on the proper and kindly treatment of Indians, together with a proper care for the Company's goods, the encouragement of diligence and virtue and the abandonment of

wickedness and vice, the Committee had made its dispositions to resume normal trade, expansion and competition, at the Bottom of the Bay; and there resettlement went smoothly, although ice conditions in the Strait made it so late in September before the ship arrived that the essential routine was endangered. Owing to the difficulties of navigating Albany River it was customary for the ship to discharge at Moose and for the goods then to be sent by sloop to Albany. This meant that sloops from Albany, and from Eastmain, had to be at Moose with their year's furs to meet the ship, and that all were then employed in loading and unloading and in ferrying from ship to shore—for the ship lay at Shiphole off-shore. The full time-table for sloops and shallops was easily upset by the late arrival of the ship, and in 1783 it was complicated by the duty of taking basic supplies, as well as the trade-goods for the year, back to Eastmain.

John Thomas, Master at Moose, nevertheless got Turnor off to Brunswick, sent George Atkinson back to Eastmain, and began to rebuild one of his flankers at Moose and to prepare for the expedition to Abitibi which he had been forced to postpone. It was a year in which the fall goose-hunt failed almost everywhere, and country provisions were scarce, so that English food had to be taken inland and the sloops also could not be provisioned properly for their voyages. The fur hunts, too, went badly except at Eastmain, and even there the spring hunt failed.

Henley and Gloucester were re-established from Albany. There also shortage of country provisions affected the year's trade, and though the rebuilding of Henley was a great encouragement and held out hopes for future years, not an Indian traded there during the winter, and Albany's trade for 1783-4 also fell off. It was almost inevitable that some such relapse should have followed from the withdrawal of the Company's posts in the previous year, and the difficulties were increased because in their resolution to withdraw and concentrate on the defence of Albany the Council had also included Severn River in the posts to be evacuated. There Lapérouse, having little time to spare, had left the post intact with a small establishment, who appealed to Albany for help, knowing that none could come from York or Churchill. It was March 1783 before a sloop could be sailed to Severn from Albany; and in August, having heard no further news or instructions, John Hodgson packed the remains of trade-goods and evacuated the post, taking everything of value to Albany. Hodgson's decision had to be reversed within a month, when the ships arrived from England. But York had too

much on hand to make good the deficiencies at Severn; so Albany, and Moose had to be appealed to. The *Beaver* sloop was fully occupied in supplying and trading to Eastmain and the old *Moose* sloop needed such repairs that she was not quite reliable and could not, in any case, be got ready for Severn until July 1784. In addition to blankets and other trade-goods it is interesting to note that she took three cattle to Severn; an extra cow and calf might have been sent, but the sloop had no room for them. The post at Severn was already re-established before the reinforcement arrived. There the provision hunts had gone well, and William Falconer and his men traded about two thousand Made-beaver. Some allowance on these returns was made to Albany, but Severn was re-placed firmly under the control of York.

The Bottom of the Bay and its outposts had made a vigorous and remarkable recovery in 1783, but it was June 1784 before Philip Turnor could set off with ten men 'towards Abbitibi'. His equipment consisted of two boats and four large and four small canoes; and once more the boats revealed serious defects as a means of inland travel. But though the boats eventually had to be left on the journey, one of them pleased Turnor so much that he thought she should be copied, and the canoes also gave him so much trouble that in the end he had to stop and build new ones. The inevitable delay meant that he was unable to get the whole way to Abitibi Lake in 1784. He stopped about sixty miles short, at the junction of the Abitibi and Frederick House Rivers and there spent the winter in a log tent. In spring 1785 he chose a better site, about fifty miles further south, on a little gravel hill, where he built the permanent post which the Committee named Frederick House.

Turnor himself remained in command at Frederick House during the winter of 1785-6, and there found himself in close but not unfriendly rivalry with the Pedlars, whose organisation was during these years taking on great stability and competence, and who replied to the thrust southwards of the Hudson's Bay posts by ordering their traders to trust the Indians with almost unlimited debt, and to undersell Turnor by one-third. Turnor's answer, in 1787, was to embark on a survey of the Canadian posts. For the ultimate point at issue, which would settle the trade rivalry other things being equal, was whether the Pedlars or the Hudson's Bay men had the cheaper and more effective route to this frontier of their rivalry. It was all very well for the Pedlars to cheapen their goods, and to try to score in trade over such minor points as the price of garter elastic. But if their route from the centre of manufacture in

England to the centre of distribution on Lake Abitibi was more difficult and costly than that through the Bay, then they were at an inescapable disadvantage. This the Pedlars revealed in their own journeys designed to find better routes to their posts, and Turnor in opposition surveyed the route to Lake Timiskaming. In so doing he crossed the watershed dividing the streams which flow into Hudson Bay from those which flow to the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa Rivers.

The rivalry with the Pedlars south from the Bottom of the Bay had stretched the Company out at last to explore, and to set up trade posts, to the utmost limits of the territories covered in the Charter. For the time being this achievement concluded Turnor's services as an active Surveyor for the Company. He returned to England in the autumn of 1787 and for a couple of years stayed in England, recuperating his ravaged health and bringing his maps and surveys to perfection.

The Committee, in planning Turnor's settlement at Frederick House, had ordered that he should be accompanied by a French-Canadian, Germain Maugenest, from whom they hoped that he would receive considerable assistance. Turnor himself was chilly in his reception of this proposal, feared that he would get little assistance from Maugenest, but promised civility and kindness, and that he would listen to any proposal *founded upon reason*. His fears seemed borne out by the fact that Maugenest returned back to Moose, and agreed that he could be no further use to Turnor in his log tent and in his plan of moving on further towards Abitibi in 1785. In the latter year too, although Maugenest was used to take supplies up to Turnor, he did not remain with him and go on to settle Frederick House but went back to take command at Brunswick.

By that time Maugenest was a proved disappointment not only to Turnor but to the London Committee and to the Governors by the Bay. But there had been good reason to suppose that he would have made a worthwhile contribution to the Company's policy, and his failure makes a poignant contrast with the success achieved by Turnor; for whereas Turnor with no experience of the fur trade was able to make himself acceptable, and to assess the situation, all the way from Hudson House to Abitibi, Maugenest, with a wealth of knowledge and experience, was nevertheless of little value because his knowledge was of one district only. He had first come to the attention of the Company in 1779, when he had come down to Gloucester House in company with the Englishman John Coates and two canoes containing about two thousand beaver, on their way

down from the Pedlars' post on Rainy Lake to the Company's fort at Albany. He had behind him nine years in the North-west trade, having previously traded to the Mississippi; but what with perfidy from his partners and embezzlement from his clerks he had profited little. Yet he talked largely of his influence on the Indians of Rainy Lake, Woody Lake and Nipigon; and though Governor Thomas Hutchins at Albany was forbidden to have any dealing with renegade Pedlars he had little choice (in humanity) but to give Coates and his men provisions enough to carry them back to Sturgeon Lake, while he stretched the point still further and kept Maugenest at Albany till shiptime and then sent him to England to put his views and plans before the Committee.

In London the Committee listened to Maugenest with respect, and in 1780 they sent him back to Albany at a salary of £100 a year, plus a commission of five shillings a score on all the beaver he traded by travelling inland. He was to go to Gloucester House by way of Henley, having convinced the Committee that he had already arranged for a considerable body of Indians to meet him there. He was to renounce the Pedlars' method of trade and was to trade only on behalf of the Company, having no goods for trade on his own account. But Maugenest was given a generous outfit, and it included a number of Point Blankets, now first made for the Company at Witney in Oxfordshire. The 'points' were marks on the side of the blanket, denoting its size and its value in beaver, a three point blanket being traded for three beaver, and so according to the number of points. This system of standardising the blankets had great merits in simplifying trade, but it was some little time (in 1786) before the Company took advantage of this by making the correspondence complete between 'points' and beaver. The innovation was probably due to Maugenest's suggestion while he was in London, but the Committee treated its first shipment of a hundred 'point blankets' rather as a novelty than as a practical help to trade, for a three point blanket was made equal to four beaver, a two point blanket to two-and-a-half beaver, and so on. Once the point blanket had fallen into its proper place it became an inestimable asset in the fur trade (and still preserves its reputation); yet the long-term value of this innovation of Maugenest's was not due to the system of pointing as such but to the standard of honesty with which the system was applied. It was the quality of the blankets and the unfailing fairness with which the points were kept to standard measurements which made them so valuable an asset to the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Company's men, however much the Committee might hope

from Maugenest's knowledge of the Gloucester House region, were most reluctant to travel with him, for his earlier reports of plentiful provisions in the Sturgeon Lake area had proved false. So Maugenest was not sent inland in 1780 and, as it turned out, the canoes of Indians which he had promised did not come to Gloucester House either. It was May 1781 before he was sent off from Albany with 4,873 Made-beaver in trade-goods, carefully chosen and carefully stowed (in a manner which won the admiration of Thomas Hutchins) into *bateaux* which had been built to Maugenest's orders. These were shallow boats, drawing not much more than a foot of water, with a square stern which made them more easily manageable and of a larger capacity than ordinary boats would have been. There was much in this preparation which underlined Maugenest's experience and competence as a trader and traveller and which justified the Committee's confidence in him—a confidence tempered by judicious circumspection—and he was given a commission which made him the Company's factor for two hundred miles above Gloucester. But the men, and the officers, still suspected him and thought it 'an hardship to be commanded by a Frenchman', and he returned their mistrust by declaring that the thirty English who were appointed to go with him were too inexperienced and could not live on the country as they travelled. Nor could they handle a canoe.

Difficulties in getting his boats inland prevented Maugenest from getting further than Gloucester House, where he spent the winter 1781-2. He returned to Albany in 1782, and again in that year postponed the expedition to go past Gloucester House because there was not enough water in the rivers for the boats; but he was now maintaining that such a further post was not needed since the Indians would come down to Gloucester to trade. It was at this stage, when Governor Hutchins had determined merely to keep him at Albany and when Maugenest was so anxious to get the command at Gloucester (but not to extend beyond it) that he was attached to Turnor largely with the object of getting him away from the Indians of Gloucester among whom he had influence.

Maugenest's failure to help Turnor in the establishment of Frederick House in 1784-5 was therefore of a piece with the whole of his career. He showed to the full the advantages of the Canadian-trained trader, in ideas, knowledge and techniques; and he showed also the difficulty of harnessing that capacity to the purpose of the English Company whose essence was close accountancy, cautious experimentation, and subordination of the individual to the common concern.

Maugenest had, however, been the counterpart to Turnor although he had been of so little use to him. For he had brought into emphasis the forward frontier of Albany while Turnor was pushing forward the frontier from Moose. Both were aspects of what Maugenest had described as 'the Petit Nord', distinct from the 'Grand North which ran up above York Fort and Severn'; and the 'Petit Nord' was still, in 1785, of equal importance in the Committee's eyes with the 'Grand North'.

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CHAPTER V

INLAND SETTLEMENTS AND THE NORTH WEST COMPANY

Recovery and expansion in the 'Petit Nord' in 1783 were based upon the existing posts at Moose and Albany. The French had not actually touched the Bottom of the Bay, and the outposts which had been closed had been so treated by the Company's men themselves. Confidence was high, a determined attitude had been adopted in the crisis, and resumption of trade was easy and natural. In the 'Grand North', in contrast, the Company was faced with the actual destruction of its posts in full sight of the Indians. Recovery would in any case be more difficult; and in the 'Grand North' also the distances which they had to cover entailed that the combinations of the Pedlars must be more weighty and enduring, more enterprising and less easy to overcome. The 'Grand North' however had its firm place in the Company's trade system, and at the time when Lapérouse broke into the Bay the trade of that area was so important and so promising that there could be no question but that the posts should be immediately restored, and trade resumed.

Until the small-pox epidemic had cut them, the fur returns from York Fort had been creeping steadily upwards. Reduced to seven thousand skins in 1773 by the opposition of the Pedlars, they had been enlarged with the help of the inland posts to almost 26,000 in 1780-1 (the York Fort Letter Book gives over 30,000), and even when the epidemic had interrupted trade the returns of 1781-2 were almost 13,000. Of these the Inland Settlements contributed about half the total; and in 1782 the inland trade had already come down to York and was stowed aboard the *King George* before Lapérouse appeared off the post, so that when the ship slipped her anchors and made off for England York's trade for that year was safely on its way to London. In that year, therefore, though no trade came home from Churchill, the Committee got from the Bottom of the Bay and York, between them, enough furs to provide for the market as the war with the American colonists dragged to its close. The sales of January and March 1783 showed brisk buying of all lots and produced almost £25,800, and the Committee was in reasonable funds to carry on its trade.

Yet when the Governor and Committee met on 23rd July, 1783,

they resolved that no dividend could be paid 'on account of the heavy loss sustained by the destruction of Prince of Wales and York Forts in Hudson's Bay by a Squadron of French Ships of War'. This was the first year in which a dividend had not been voted since 1718. Despite the increase of the nominal capital to £103,950 at the time of the Bubble, the Company had maintained a steady succession of ten per cent. dividends, dropping to eight per cent. only in the war years from 1746 to 1763 (to seven per cent. in 1749 and 1750) and again during the American War from 1779 to 1782. Dividends were not resumed again until 1786, and then only at a meagre five per cent.; but lack of dividends did not at all mean that the Company was without resources, or purpose, during these years. Hearne and Marten were re-engaged without delay, the posts which they had seen destroyed were to be rebuilt, and determined plans were adopted for York, Severn, Churchill and 'Inland Service' in the north. In all a hundred and twenty men were allotted to service in the 'Grand North', slightly more than for the 'Petit Nord', and the returning commanders were purposefully sent back to their posts.

To Humphrey Marten at York the lessons of economy, frugality and diligence were expounded, as they were annually to the masters of all posts. His most immediate duty was to set up a post from which the trade of York could once more radiate outwards; and to expedite this he was supplied a house 'in frame', to be taken out on the *King George*. The results which the Committee hoped to reap from the peace with the now independent United States were then outlined for him. He was told that the south-east part of Canada was to be ceded and that, the States having no right to interfere within the limits of the Charter, he would thereby get a fine opportunity of re-establishing the Company's trade to its full former extent. So, with this in mind, he was given an extra supply of goods, but was warned not to waste them by departing from the Standard of Trade.

After the re-establishment of his post at York, Marten's duty was to relieve the distress to which the French disaster would almost certainly have reduced the servants left inland. A messenger was to be sent to the Master at Cumberland to tell him that trade would be resumed, and goods and necessities were to be sent inland as soon as possible.

Samuel Hearne, returning to Churchill on like terms, was also given a house ready-shaped in frame for immediate erection, and was urged to push his trade on much the same lines. But whereas Marten's instructions were based upon the knowledge that Tomison and Longmoor were already inland, expecting relief, Hearne's

instructions had to be less precise. For in 1782 the Pedlars' threat to Churchill's trade had not yet become clear and the Company's rejoinder was as yet only a project under discussion. So in 1783 the Committee, not knowing how the threat to Athabaska had developed, and having as yet no commitment by way of rejoinder, could give Hearne no express directions. He was merely given a general expression of the Committee's zealous wishes for promoting all discovery as well as for encouraging trade!

Like the *Seahorse*, the *King George* had made a long and difficult voyage in 1783, and Humphrey Marten could not get ashore at York until 15th September. He and his men got the temporary house up, aghast at the thin wood, mere pasteboard, which English carpenters had given them to withstand the Arctic winter. They faced their task with all the more uneasiness because the venison and goose hunts were over before their arrival, English provisions were short, and they found forty-seven starved Indians awaiting their arrival in the useless ruins of the old fort which Lapérouse had left.

The late arrival of the 1783 ships was particularly unfortunate at York, for Marten found that William Tomison had come down from Cumberland with over six thousand Made-beaver, hoping to meet the ship and to get fresh supplies. He arrived on the shore on 6th August and waited there until 8th September, 'sometimes Starving and at other times Eating a little Deers flesh'. Then, a bare week before Marten and the *King George* brought the supplies on which their lives depended, Tomison and his men left their furs in a log tent and decided that their only hope of survival was to return inland, there to live off the country. It was too late for Marten to send a relief party after them, and in fact they had to rely on their rivals the Pedlars for food and for ammunition to hunt. The Committee found Tomison's Journals enclosed in one of his bundles of furs when it came to be opened in London in 1784, and they were deeply touched by the spirit and the sufferings of the inland servants. They ordered a large supply of goods to be sent immediately to Cumberland; but Tomison and his men had by then come through the winter. The posts at Cumberland and Hudson House had remained, and though they had been forced to part with some of their furs to the Pedlars in order to survive, the Hudson's Bay Company men brought down over five thousand Made-beaver to York in the summer of 1784. Cautiously 'declaring that our Condescension in this respect is not to be drawn into a precedent in future for a like encrease of Wages in others', the Committee gave them increases in salary.

The survival of the Inland Settlements meant, in a way, that Marten's work was done for him. York also thereby survived, and with it the contacts with the Saskatchewan which were to endow York with its vast importance. By contrast with this resurrection of York based upon the Company's men, Hearne at Churchill found the greatest difficulties with his Indians. The suicide of the great and faithful Matonabee, and the spread inland of the disastrous news of the fall of the post, did untold harm. Moreover Hearne, like Marten, arrived very late in the year. Many of his Indians had already left the coast and gone inland and, lacking powder and shot, they starved through the winter, and none of his Upland Indians came down to trade until the following May. By that time Hearne had his frame-house up and in occupation. He had been left freedom of choice as to the siting of his post, and he chose the site of the early wooden fort, about five miles up-river from the ruins of the great stone fort, as being nearer to the woods, water and hunting grounds. Geese were plentiful, but Hearne could not spare men to hunt them, and there were no Indians. However, partridges and other game came in plenty after Christmas, and Churchill did not lack provisions. Wood was a different problem, and with a heavy programme in hand for building outhouses and offices to supplement his meagre frame-house, Hearne realised to the full that Churchill produced nothing which could be called timber. Even firewood was exceedingly scarce and took much labour.

Compared with the other re-established posts, Hearne passed an easy and comfortable winter at Churchill, with 'no want of anything the Country produces in their proper seasons'. But he found it impossible to revive the trade of the place. The Churchill Indians were either dead or gone to the Canadians. For the Athabaska trade on which Churchill had long depended—indeed, James Knight had founded the post in order to meet the Indians from Athabaska—the French irruption had come at a most unfortunate time. The Indians had in any case an astonishingly long and arduous journey from Lake Athabaska south on the Athabaska River, up the Clearwater and then over Portage la Loche (Methy Portage) into Churchill River, past Ile-à-la-Crosse and Lac la Ronge and so over Portage de Traite into Churchill River and down to the Bay.

The great southwards swing of the route gave better rivers and a much longer season of open water. But it took the Chipewyans into the sphere of influence of the Pedlars on the Saskatchewan; and the Pedlars, as their internal rivalries drove them, and as their expanding organisation enabled them, pressed ever further into Athabaska. The

attraction of the Canadians' trade for the Chipewyans was therefore no new thing when Hearne noted it on his return to his devastated post. In many ways it was a sensible thing, and he sympathised with it; the fact that it was sensible made it all the more dangerous and difficult to overcome 'for when they once get a haunt of trading so near home though at a great disadvantage, it is scarcely possible to bring them over to us again without purchasing them at double their Value'. Cocking had noted as early as 1776 that Indians who used to trade at Churchill had been cut off by the Pedlars on the Saskatchewan, successive chiefs at Churchill had the problem always in mind, and Hearne met it at a particularly difficult and dangerous juncture, when the Pedlars had adopted a policy of sending expeditions into Athabaska instead of merely waiting to entice the Chipewyans into a trade as they went down to distant Churchill.

The Frobishers had started this penetration towards Athabaska when they set up their post in Churchill River and sent the renegade Primeau to Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1776; it was carried further when Thomas Frobisher wintered at Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1777, and further still when the redoubtable Peter Pond went into Athabaska in 1778. In this venture into 'a country hitherto unknown but from Indian report' Pond was being outfitted from a point far nearer to his objective than Michilimackinac or even Grand Portage; the five canoes for his venture were fitted out on the Saskatchewan itself, from the remains of former years. This was an important step, indicating both the need for advanced outfitting posts and for a broad-based partnership to undertake any expansion beyond the upper posts on the Saskatchewan; and Pond had behind him the group of Pedlars who had formed a syndicate on the Saskatchewan in 1777. Even with such advantages, and with his own experience and determination as assets of enormous value, Pond ran into grave trouble. He was reported to have 'got so far into Athappuskow Country that the Indians think it will be late the next summer before he gets back', and it was in fact July 1779 before he got back to Cumberland. He then had only three canoes left, and he was 'very much distressed for want of food'.

Though he was an acute observer Pond had no training as a surveyor and no instruments, so there must be some doubt about his actual course and achievements in this year, as in subsequent years. But it is most probable that he crossed Portage la Loche and spent the winter on the Clearwater River, about thirty miles from its entry into Lake Athabaska. Here, if it was here, he was in magnificent fur-bearing country, and among Indians who welcomed with en-

thusiasm the trade which he brought to their doors. The prospects which he opened up began a new era in the fur trade, as did the organisation which had made his journey possible.

By the time Pond got back to the Saskatchewan he had traded even the clothes off his back, and he had got something like eight thousand Made-beaver in prime furs, much of which he was compelled to leave behind for lack of transport. The Hudson's Bay Company men at Cumberland helped Pond with food and supplies; but they knew well the threat to their trade which such expeditions portended. Their answer was to send out their own men to bring the Indians in to trade, and in 1781 they proposed to send Longmoor into Athabaska from Cumberland. That was a proposal which the small-pox epidemic defeated, and although Samuel Hearne at Churchill seemed to hope that trade with his 'southern Indians' would survive the threat, it was Churchill which was under fire.

Pond's return from Athabaska in 1779 brought him right out to Montreal, and there great developments were taking place as the Frobishers and Alexander Henry realised the wealth which might be won if they could perfect a system which would enable them to extend a regular trade from the Saskatchewan to Churchill River and so past Ile-à-la-Crosse and over Portage la Loche to Athabaska and the watershed of the Arctic.

As yet it is quite impossible to give any sort of definition to the group (or groups) which were formed and re-shuffled, but in 1779 a definite and formal 'North West Company', organised in sixteen shares, was described in an official report to Governor Haldimand. The sixteen shares were held by nine different partnerships, and the partners thus brought together included all ranks in the Canadian fur trade. There were Montreal business men, such as Isaac Todd and James McGill, the latter's brother John, Simon McTavish, Forrest Oakes and Lawrence Ermatinger. There were also Michilimackinac traders such as George McBeath, and there were genuine Indian traders such as Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher, William Holmes, Robert Grant, John Ross, Stephen Waden, and Peter Pond.

That so many different interests could be brought together, and a form for sharing their trade worked out, for one year only, seems astonishing. But brief partnerships were as yet the custom, and this wide 'North West Company' or Society (as it was called), was dissolved at the end of the year. But Pond had left a quantity of furs in Athabaska which necessitated action by the informal partnership which had outfitted him in 1778. The Swiss Jean Etienne Waden

(or Wadden) was therefore appointed by the partners to go inland and winter at Lac la Ronge. The informal partnership of Saskatchewan traders therefore co-existed with the 'North West Company' and included some of the same men; but the 'North West Company' arrangement was both more comprehensive and more definite than the partnership which had provided the outfit for Pond, for it gave to each one of sixteen partners a definite share in the trade. Pond himself probably figured as a partner in the firm of McBeath and Company, but he did not himself go inland again until 1780-1, by which time a new agreement among the Pedlars was in operation, dividing the trade once more into sixteen shares.

Many Pedlars were left out, and there was room for bitter rivalry. Pond represented the great houses in this arrangement—the Frobishers, McGills, Ellices and McTavish—when he went to Athabaska for the second time in 1780, while Waden and his partner St. Germain represented the smaller men. Like the Hudson's Bay traders, they met the scourge of the small-pox and traded little; but in 1781-2 Pond again went north, as did Waden, and in the spring of 1782 their differences of interest and of temperament produced such a clash that Waden was killed at his post at Lac la Ronge. There can be little doubt that it was a brutal murder by Pond and his servant, for the remaining evidence points that way although Pond was later judicially acquitted at Montreal. The murder broke up the precarious partnership of the Pedlars, and it ended the organisation of the smaller men who preferred to wait for the furs to come to them at Lac la Ronge rather than to go and fetch them in Athabaska.

The advantages of the schemes for amalgamation which had already been tried seemed clear, and in the winter of 1783-4 a further agreement was formed, this time known formally as the North West Company. Some of the earlier partners were dead or had turned from active trading, others had turned from the north-west trade to the Mississippi and the south-west, a move which took Isaac Todd, the brothers McGill and Charles Patterson, out from competition in the north-west. The resulting organisation was to dominate the Pedlars' trade for five years under a common stock into which the separate resources of the traders were thrown. Again the stock was divided into sixteen shares, but the great weight lay with the Montreal merchants, Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher, and with Simon McTavish, and though Pond was given one share he was dissatisfied and refused to sign. Instead, he threw in his lot with the other discontented small traders, the frontiersmen rather than the

Montreal capitalists, and in 1784 he and Peter Pangman came down to Montreal with the object of founding a rival concern.

The North West Company as founded in 1783 was more formal and more important than any of its predecessors. But it was not a chartered corporation and had no rights as such. It was said to have been officially registered at Quebec for public inspection, but it was never incorporated, and it was not a limited liability company. It had no common capital, but each partner contributed to the formation of a common stock of trade-goods. It was a form of organisation known as a 'common-law company', wherein considerable power of joint action was combined (as events were to prove) with a lack of corporate responsibility for such action. The two Montreal houses, of Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher and of Simon McTavish, were entrusted with the general management of affairs, and the brothers Frobisher named themselves 'Directors'. The trade under control of this company necessitated an annual outlay of about £25,000, and they reckoned to have an equal sum already inland, so that the capital involved in goods alone was about £50,000, currency,¹ and the annual trade was reckoned to be about £100,000 sterling a year, or half of the total from the Province, the remainder coming in equal parts from the inhabited parts of Canada and from Niagara, Detroit and the southern trade.

This was a vast, experienced, and powerful organisation which had come into being. But as yet it did not control all of the opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company. Pond and Pangman were not the only traders left outside although the North West Company was based upon the conviction that it was impossible to carry on the fur trade 'to any extent in opposite interests, without manifest ruin to some of the parties concerned and the destruction of the trade. While on the contrary, by a well-regulated System in that long and precarious chain of connections which a Company alone can establish and execute, every Advantage may be derived from discovery and improvement'.

The partners thought in terms of monopoly—at least of amalgamating all interests—but not only did Pond and Pangman and other lesser traders stay outside, but the Company could find no place for the rival firm of merchant-outfitters which had derived from the partnership of Finlay and Gregory of 1773. This firm had remained in the active fur trade; but on Finlay's retirement in 1783

¹ For the currency of the fur trade see Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. I, p. 186, n. 1. A guinea sterling was equal to £1 3s. 4d. in Halifax currency. The North West system of trade is dealt with on pp. 186 *et seq.*

his place as partner had been taken by Norman McLeod, who had just come up to Canada from Detroit.

Pond, however, withdrew his objections and took up his share in the Company; a partner in 1785, he petitioned Governor Haldimand to support the North West Company for the purpose of exploring north from Athabaska Lake, where he alone had been, down to the North Pacific Ocean. In effect this was a proposal to explore down the valley of the Mackenzie River to the Arctic, for although Pond appears later to have changed his views, his analysis of Indian reports had led him in 1785 to a correct outline view of the Athabaska and Mackenzie systems. His proposals were part of a general movement to place the North West Company in a favourable light, as an agency prepared to explore the country, to counteract American influence on the southern frontier, to provide a wide market for English goods, and to help in that search for a passage to the Pacific which was at this time inspiring government and people to support the explorations of Captain James Cook.

Governor Haldimand was won over. But the North West Company received no official privileges or status. The Athabaska project under Pond therefore took on the aspect of fur trading rather than exploration. He returned to Athabaska as the representative of the North West Company in 1785, and in 1786 he was responsible for setting up Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake and even for a visit further north to what was later called Fort Providence on that lake. In this he met opposition, not from the Hudson's Bay Company, but from rival Pedlars who had not been included in the North West Company. Pond, with the North West Company behind him, was nevertheless formulating a grave threat to the trade of York and of Churchill as he pushed the route from Montreal into the far north-west.

In London the Hudson's Bay Company Committee were indeed alarmed at the falling-off of Churchill's trade and at the quantities of furs which their rivals were able to put on the market. With the fur returns from Canada hovering between £165,000 and £242,000 in these years, and the Company's shipments at about £30,000 worth, the London price would inevitably be set at the level at which the predominant sellers, the agents of the North West Company, would be prepared to deal.

The answer to their problem lay in Athabaska, and recognising this the Committee in 1785 ordered that Robert Longmoor should be sent inland from Churchill, to explore the course of Churchill River and to decide where houses might be built to combat the

Pedlars, with whom the Indians had increasingly traded since the destruction of Fort Prince of Wales. Longmoor was, of course, admirably adapted for such a task, and he was to be accompanied by a Grey Coat apprentice, George Charles, for whom instruments were sent out. But the lad was deemed too young to be trusted with the instruments while at the Factory; he was only to be given them for the journey. Samuel Hearne, however, proved a grave disappointment in this, as in other matters since he returned to Churchill. The Committee took him to task for extravagance and indifference, and for apathy in the slooping trade to the northward. But their project for exploring the Churchill River came to nothing because of his settled habits of thought, for Hearne sent Longmoor to the Saskatchewan, not to Churchill River, in 1786. There he was to establish a new post, Manchester House, on the north bank of the river, while the apprentice George Charles was sent with Malchom Ross, an Orkney labourer who had been at Cumberland and at Hudson House, and who was a magnificent traveller. They went across Button Bay from Churchill, up the Pukkathapusko River, then over to Churchill River and up Kissinging River to its source. There they crossed the divide to the Saskatchewan basin at Pine-wood River and so went by Athappuskow Lake, Goose River and Sturgeon-weir River, to Cumberland, where they remained. Ross got information of Pedlars' posts, and of their canoes, on the Churchill River during this journey, but he presented no effective answer to their moves, and though he brought down Indians to trade at York who had never before been seen there, the Committee took exception to Hearne's view that York and the Saskatchewan were the only means of opposing the Pedlars, and that nothing could be done in the way of inland expeditions from Churchill.

This was the climax of Hearne's misdemeanours. At root the Committee's misgivings were based on the fact that his returns did not match his expenses, a merchant's approach. But his apparent reluctance to explore also rankled, and Hearne was allowed to retire, protesting his devotion to the Company, in 1787. But if Hearne failed to raise an effective opposition to Pond, the other Pedlars precipitated a crisis. When Pond had thrown in his lot with the North West Company in 1785 he had left Peter Pangman and John Ross as the leaders of the smaller men who were not included in the great combine. They needed financial backing and business management to balance their frontier enterprise, and these qualities they found in a partnership with the firm of Gregory, McLeod and Company of Montreal. Compared with the North West Company

the organisation under Gregory, McLeod and Company, seemed to carry little weight, but it sent John Ross to rival Peter Pond in Athabaska and it revealed the uncompromising hostility latent in the Pedlars' struggle. In 'a scuffle' of which no detailed account survives, Pond killed his rival—the third death to be laid at his door. But the death of Ross was not the only bitter incident of 'the severest struggle ever known in that part of the world', and when the news was brought down to Grand Portage in 1787 all arguments pointed to an amalgamation lest the two concerns should destroy each other.

With the inclusion of Gregory, McLeod and Company, the North West Company as reorganised in 1787 controlled almost the entire resources of the Canadians in a way which posed a new threat to the Hudson's Bay Company. It included John Gregory, Norman McLeod, Peter Pangman and Alexander Mackenzie (who had been trained in Gregory's counting-house and who had gladly joined Gregory, McLeod and Company and gone in from Grand Portage to English River on their behalf). Of its total stock of twenty shares it gave one each to Peter Pond and William Holmes. Benjamin Frobisher died just before the new organisation was completed, and his surviving brother held three shares while Simon McTavish held four. Between them, therefore, Joseph Frobisher and Simon McTavish owned a dominating block of seven shares, and they controlled four more which were held by Nicholas Montour and Patrick Small. Their position was greatly enhanced by the fact that they also formed the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company in November, 1787. Over the whole brooded the fine and determined intelligence of Simon McTavish, and it was he who planned the moves which gave to McTavish, Frobisher and Company, their unity, and their control of the business of shipping from England and supplying goods to the North West Company.

This was the basis of the North West Company which supplied so formidable an opposition for the next generation, and whose character and exploits make the Hudson's Bay men seem colourless, methodical and uninspired. It was a potent blend of managerial capacity, ruthless enterprise, and buoyant courage. Perhaps its most typical move was to send the young Alexander Mackenzie to Athabaska, there to learn from Pond his enthusiasm for following the great river to the northward and then to replace him in command and to carry his projects to success in his voyages 'to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans'.

Samuel Hearne's dogmatic reversion to the Saskatchewan was

not the only countercheck which the Hudson's Bay Company found for this newly-organised and forceful expansion of the North West Company. While Longmoor set up Manchester House and Malchom Ross made Cumberland the centre of renewed activity (he was prevented from using it as a starting point for Athabaska, as Hearne had planned, by a shortage of goods) the Bottom of the Bay saw the Company push southwards. There Brunswick, Henley, and Gloucester House had been re-established and Eastmain had been rebuilt to accommodate a larger staff and an increasing trade. But the main counter-thrust was 'towards Abbitibi' and was in the hands of Philip Turnor. It was as well that the Committee had at hand someone with the over-all knowledge of Turnor, for these were years in which policy had to be reviewed, and perhaps reshaped. Alongside of Turnor's establishment at Frederick House had gone a more westerly thrust from the Bottom of the Bay. This had stemmed from Albany, not from Moose, and had carried the Company's posts past Henley and Gloucester House to the establishment of Osnaburgh on Lake St. Joseph (Pascocoggan). James Sutherland was ordered to explore this territory, and St. Ann's Lake (Lake Nipigon), in 1784, but since the Indians were on the war-path Sutherland's expedition had to be postponed for lack of guides, and in 1785 John Best was sent to make the journey.

The Company's men, pushing south from the Bottom of the Bay, had met the Pedlars in the 'Fire Country' as it was called. The area concerned was a little vague, but the importance of this area north and west from Kaministiquia was fully appreciated, and the Company's object was clear. The Committee wanted 'To gain a thorough knowledge of the Country, and the Natives; and the best method of Procuring Country Provisions, which would lessen the Carriage of European Victuals, which would be of the most beneficial Advantage'. The Committee thought that what the traders called the 'Fire Country' was the same belt as was called the Barren Lands and the Meadow Country at Cumberland, by the Indians the Muscuty Plains. If that should be so, then the Company's men would be able to get 'Buffalo, Moose and Deer in plenty both green and dried'. This provision could then be left *en cache* (the Committee used the word 'deposit') on journeys, and the purpose of the Company's invasion of the 'Fire Country' was to secure provisions which would facilitate penetration elsewhere.

In such an approach to the 'Fire Country' the Committee showed a correct appreciation of the position, and their view was emphasised in a letter which Edward Umfreville wrote to Jarvis at Albany in

that year, 1785. Umfreville had been an employee of the Company, engaged as a writer at York and at Severn, and showing very considerable capacity there in the time of Norton, Cocking and Graham, in planning the outfits which took the Hudson's Bay Company men up the Saskatchewan for the foundation of Cumberland. He was at York when Lapérouse captured it, and was taken a prisoner there. On his release he did not re-enter the service but 'some disagreement arising in point of salary', he went to Quebec and there entered the service of the Pedlars. Just before Pond's murder of Ross precipitated the re-formation of the North West Company so as to include Gregory, McLeod and Company, in 1784, Umfreville had been sent out to explore a route from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg. The Northwesters were afraid that the boundary with the United States would be drawn through Lake of the Woods, as agreed in the Peace Treaty, in such a way that they would be deprived of the Grand Portage, the key to the transportation system into the north-west. They therefore sent Umfreville and Venant St. Germain off to plot a new route via Lake Nipigon. This was a difficulty which the Hudson's Bay Committee had expected the peace with the United States to inflict upon the Northwesters, but in fact the Grand Portage remained available despite the peace treaty, and Umfreville's route proved needless, difficult and long. He then served inland for the North West Company at Cedar Lake on the Upper Saskatchewan until 1787, and it was from this point of vantage that he appears to have written to Jarvis, to sound out the possibilities of re-entering the Company's service and to stir the Company to push southwards from Gloucester.

Umfreville's book on the *Present State of Hudson's Bay* is so obviously tinged with personal dislike of Humphrey Marten and with a bitter resentment at the Company which refused to re-engage him that we are apt to discount him, especially when a closer examination makes it clear that many of his observations are taken entire from James Isham's 'Observations', perhaps amended by Graham. But Umfreville was an able man; in 1786 he was in command of the farthest outpost up the Saskatchewan. Here, although apparently in the region controlled from York and Churchill, he was in fact in nearest contact with the posts at the Bottom of the Bay through the channel of their southern outposts. John Kipling wrote from Gloucester House that Umfreville was in the 'Fire Country' and was able to stay inland and to drive a good trade. Obviously Umfreville knew the importance of the focal area north of Lake Superior, and obviously he could tell the Committee much about

their rivals. He made it clear that the provision trade was a vital element in the Northwesters' arrangements, and that he was enabled to stay inland at his post because his supplies were organised by the North West Company from Grand Portage, and because his post was small and almost mobile.

The Northwesters' often temporary posts gave them a penetrating power which the Hudson's Bay men lacked, and greater freedom of action. At Moose John Thomas recorded in his private journal that 'these little Houses round us send as much furs each out of the Country as Your great factorys have sometimes done', and he emphasised the Canadians' closeness to the Indians and their unscrupulous use of the 'trust' system to get the Indians' furs. Gloucester House felt the rivalry of Best at Osnaburgh, and much of its trade was cut off by such a small house 'in the direct road where every Gloster Indian passes', and the Indians reported that there was hardly a lake without a house on it, and that they had the greatest difficulty in getting any furs past the cordon. So while the Committee approved of Best's settlement at Lake St. Joseph (Osnaburgh House) in 1786, they did not wish to commit themselves to a major expenditure which would make their policy too static. They ordered that Osnaburgh should be only a temporary post from which the Master would 'exert himself to get as near the Canadians as possible, and make their trade precarious and hard to get'. The post was well-placed for provisions, it was so far towards the Canadian territory that it produced offers from Canadian servants to desert to the Company, and it was to be used as a jumping-off place for a further expedition to the south. Umfreville's advice was taken although he was not himself re-employed.

Osnaburgh in this was symptomatic of the reaction of the Hudson's Bay Company to the outward thrust of the reorganised North West Company. From Henley and from Gloucester there was to be a similar mobility, and the masters were to move out from their posts. The Committee were coming to the conclusion that permanent establishments inland only multiplied costs, since the Pedlars waylaid the Indians on their way to trade. They thought that cheap log tents, which could easily be moved according to the prospects of trade and provisions, would both open up the country more rapidly and prove a better check to the Canadians. So both the approval and the restraint upon the post at Osnaburgh fell into line with a shift in general policy.

This was a shift which made for penetration inland and active competition, such as Edward Umfreville and other critics of the

Company would deny. It was a policy applicable in the area south towards Lake Superior, but not exclusively so; and in that 'Fire Country' the provision trade was expected to make expansion in the north possible. At York Fort the re-assessment of policy fell in with the retirement of Humphrey Marten. He had been severely criticised both for his intemperate habits and irascible character, and for his lethargy as a Chief. His career in the Company had from time to time been marked by the Committee's disapproval, and he was most unfortunate in that Umfreville pilloried him (though not by name) in his *State of Hudson's Bay*. Yet Marten was an experienced and wise leader, and the Committee regretted his retirement in 1786. But they took the opportunity to introduce a radical change of system from which they hoped to get great flexibility and purpose into their campaign against their rivals. They decided that, since most of the trade of York came down from inland, the principal officer should no longer constantly reside at the Factory but should spend most of his time inland, to supervise the execution of the measures decided upon and to make decisions without awaiting orders from a superior at a distance of many hundreds of miles. In 1785 the Committee had told Marten that sixty-five of his men should be sent inland and only twenty should be kept at the post since 'the Inland Trade should be the first consideration', and the new emphasis was enforced in 1786 when prime command and direction were transferred inland in a way not known previously. The Bay-side forts were to be mere 'factories' for the supply of inland posts and they, in their turn, were to supply and organise a number of small and temporary outposts. Mobility and activity were to dominate.

So William Tomison was made Chief at York, to reside inland with full powers to act as he thought fit and to allocate men and goods to the inland posts as he thought proper. Joseph Colen was made 'Resident' at York, to preside there in Tomison's absence but to yield to him when he came down to the factory. The men at York, including those destined for inland, were increased to a hundred and twelve (as against thirty-four for Churchill, sixty-five for Albany and seventy-five for Moose) and it is perhaps not altogether surprising that in the next year, 1787, the trade of York showed a definite improvement, although it was accepted that the men could not get inland in the winter of 1786 and that therefore Colen might as well use them for the rebuilding of York, 'in the form of a square House with four Flankers', which was decided upon. The Committee had decided to send so many men to York in order that plenty would always be available for the inland posts; seventy men

were to be sent inland from York, more if possible, and the changes as a whole were parts of a determination 'that nothing may be wanting to push on the inland Trade with the greatest Vigour'.

Although the increase in returns from York in 1787 was probably due to the change in personnel and to a renewed veto on private trade—a veto which provoked the ships' captains and mates to assert their claim, like all other mates and captains 'to Trade a little in a fair way'—nevertheless the change in policy proved effective when it had had time to work.

At the Bottom of the Bay also change was to be seen. Eastmain was made into a separate establishment, with twenty-eight men, independent of Moose, and was encouraged both to explore up the Eastmain coast (searching in particular for a rumoured strait from the Bay to the Atlantic) and to set up an inland post, on the same mobile, log-hut principle as had been advocated for the southern posts; probably the new post would be best sited up Rupert River. The new post was set up, but though the voyages of discovery up the Eastmain did not achieve anything the Committee were satisfied that the Eastmain trade was in good hands and was being pushed forward, and plans were made to rebuild and enlarge the post.

Moose, however, seems to have been sluggish and hide-bound in its reactions. The only expansive proposal which John Thomas made was for a small post at Harricanaw River, where he thought white whales might be killed easily, where the goose-hunt could be organised, and where perhaps a little new trade might be got. This was hardly a proposal for expanding the Company's trade; indeed it tied in with a report from Eastmain that a whale fishery to the north would not work, and it was coupled with doubts as to whether Englishmen could kill the whales. The proposal originated with George Donald, who in 1787 took charge of the plan that Moose should build a new post towards the Height of Land, at Micabanish (or Brunswick) Lake. So while the Committee protested, in 1788, that 'we cannot conceive why more difficulties should be found in varying the inland Stations at Moose' and urged a spirit of emulation and exertion there 'that we may not have occasion to alter an Opinion which we wish to maintain that We have not more diligent Servants than at Moose', at least this start was already in hand. First, in 1788, George Donald was sent to Brunswick Lake while Maugenest, from whom the Company still hoped great things, was made chief at Brunswick and, in some sort of imitation of the policy at York, was made second-in-command at Moose. So the move

forward to Brunswick Lake was accompanied by something of the same independent inland command, although at the Bottom of the Bay there was no-one available with anything comparable to the character and experience of William Tomison; for Turnor (who might have filled the bill) was back in England. Next year, in 1789, Maugenest was sent to Brunswick House, but he was still to be consulted at Moose on all matters of policy, especially upon the basic question whether Brunswick House was strategically sited.

The Committee were at this time considering their problems very seriously, with Turnor in London to help them. Along with flexibility and purpose in their outposts they insisted that new posts must not be multiplied so as to compete with each other for trade. But that did not mean that anything defeatist was accepted. While Edward Jarvis sent in plans for a series of posts radiating out from Osnaburgh southwards—at Sturgeon Lake, Red Lake, Portage de l'Isle and Rainy Lake—the Committee were planning in a similar mood, and the Company seemed to offer very fair prospects in rivalry even with the vigorously reorganised Northwesters. For great as the attractions of the North West Company may appear, with high wages, great prospects and plenty of adventure, its Canadian servants were at this time making many overtures to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Their approaches were not unwelcome, for the Company's Orkneymen were proving a little difficult, and they wanted their wages paid in cash in the Orkneys. This involved the Company in the employment of Andrew Graham as an agent—a duty which they undertook with good grace, for they wished to help their 'poor Servants there'. But the Orkneyman's demand for his wages in cash took from the Company the opportunity of paying the servants in goods at trade prices in the Bay-side posts. More important was the verdict which Samuel Hearne rendered on the Orkneymen—'Tho the Orkney men are the quietest servants, and the best adapted for this Country that can be procured; yet they are the slyest set of men under the Sun; and their universal propensity to smuggling, and Clandestin dealings of every kind, added to their Clannish attachment to each other, puts it out of the power of any one English man to detect them'. At least of equal weight with the defects of the Orkney servants was the difficulty of procuring Indians to travel or to transport goods inland. The Committee were formulating plans with Philip Turnor at their elbow, and it was his opinion that Indians were not to be trusted; nobody in his sober senses, according to Turnor, would dream of undertaking an inland expedition accom-

panied by Indians only, especially now that they had been spoiled by having two sets of Europeans competing for their loyalty. 'My own experience is fully sufficient to have deterred me from trusting any Indian in future', he wrote in 1790.

So Canadians were to be welcomed and offered reasonable terms—a policy with which the traders agreed, for they hoped to get not only good service but information about their rivals. Even Umfreville himself they were ready to employ, but not on the wages he required. They were ready to experiment with Canadians, but one of the rather quixotic terms upon which they insisted was that 'the principles of Good Faith' required that the Canadians must first have completed their contracts with their North West Company employers before the Hudson's Bay Company would engage them. Even with such a limitation, recruits do not seem to have been hard to find. Maugenest was advised to act as a recruiting agent, and the Company added to its strength David Mitchel at Albany; then George Knowles, 'well versed in the French and Indian languages and many years resident inland with the Natives in the Service of the Canadian Merchants', was also sent to Albany, to explore inland to the neighbourhood of the Canadian posts; and the Committee expected so many Canadians to enter their service that they had 'notes upon the Company' engraved and printed expressly for the purpose of allowing them to draw their wages.

The most important manifestations of the spirit in which, in 1789 and 1790, the Company met the threat implicit in the formation of the North West Company of 1787, were the plans for new voyages which went with these attempts to give mobility and purpose to the inland posts, and to recruit Canadians. One such voyage was planned by a Canadian recruit, Donald MacKay, who had been in correspondence with Turnor at Abitibi, and who made contact with the Company in 1789 from Portage du Nipigon and then sent in a proposal to set up communications with Michilimackinac for provisions and canoes for the Company's southern posts. MacKay promised to set up four posts within five years. The other two projects came from within the Company; perhaps for that reason, perhaps because they suited better with the traditions, personnel and outlook of the Company, they proved full of promise.

In 1789 the Committee decided to send Charles Thomas Isham (reputed son of James Isham, apprenticed at York Fort and trained to the fur trade) from York Fort to Cedar Lake (Lake Bourbon). There he was to settle at Swan River, collect birch-rind, make canoes, and take them up to Cumberland. From Cumberland Isham

was to follow the Canadian route north into Athabaska, going as far as the Canadians went. This plan rose from a re-perusal of the Journal which Malchom Ross had made when Hearne sent him off from Churchill in 1786; the Committee by now agreed with Hearne's view that for Athabaska 'the more easy communication for the purposes of Trade Will be from Cumberland House'. Churchill, however, was not left out of the Committee's plans. The Committee asked for details of lakes and rivers, and of North West Company posts 'Northward at the Back of Churchill', and in particular they asked for information about 'Daubent or Slave Lake'. Isham set up his post on Swan River in 1789, but George Hudson, Chief at Cumberland and a good surveyor, under whom the expedition was to have proceeded north into Athabaska, died at his post and for the moment nothing further was accomplished, though Thomas Stayner set out from Cumberland westwards towards the Rockies.

The impetus within the Company had, however, brought Turnor on the scene once more. He had come out from England in 1789 and was sent to take charge at Cumberland, while Hudson went north. It was therefore Turnor who took in hand the further organisation of the expedition to seek Slave Lake. He spent the winter at Cumberland training the apprentice David Thompson in the theory and practice of astronomy, and when the young man (an apt pupil) broke his leg in the summer of 1788 and seemed unlikely ever to be able to voyage inland again, and Stayner decided to settle and trade rather than to explore further, Turnor decided to take as his assistant Peter Fidler 'who seems a likely person to succeed me'. Turnor's projected journey to Athabaska, and perhaps to Slave Lake, was in the true tradition of the Company, both in its approach from York and Cumberland and in the fact that it took three years to launch and that the pioneers were to be trained surveyors, while Malchom Ross went to establish a trade post.

Equally in the tradition was the third Company project of 1790, a sea-borne exploration north from Churchill in the hope of finding a communication from Churchill to Athabaska Lake, 'and from thence to the Sea on the West Side of America'. This project was under the command of Captain Charles Duncan, 'A Master in His Majesty's Navy, who has been employed in exploring and surveying the N.W. Coast of America, which he has executed with great ability and Success'. He was sent to Churchill in 1790 and was to take command of the *Churchill* sloop, with John Taylor the present master to work the ship, and with Robert Longmoor to act as inter-

preter, and was forthwith to set out to the northwards. Again in 1791, if he judged it necessary, Duncan was to take the sloop exploring, and the Committee put such emphasis on exploration that Churchill was ordered to give up all thoughts of trading to the northwards in order to press on with discovery.

The plan was put in hand 'with the Privy and Approbation of Government', and the expedition was intended to be something far more than a repetition of the customary sloop voyages. Duncan was to work inland in search of a route from the coast to Athabaska Lake and even to Slave Lake, on which the Committee had again studied Samuel Hearne's Journal. If possible he was to go by water, by an inlet south of Chesterfield Inlet, or by Chesterfield Inlet itself. If water-routes failed, a land party was to press on. Duncan was to be accompanied by Indians—that indeed was a necessity—but in order to free him from the Indians' control the Committee suggested that he might contrive a 'Machine' for conveying his provisions by placing a boat on a sledge, which could then be propelled over snow or ice either by sails or by poles! But even with this strange notion in their minds, the Committee accepted the possibility that the inexperienced Duncan might be unable to travel during the winter. In that case he was to winter at White Snow Lake (Hearne's Yathked Lake), where he was certain to meet Eskimos who would know the way thence to the Pacific. Should he thus find the Northwest Passage for which Captain James Cook was even then probing from the opposite direction, Duncan was given the choice of coming back by the same way or of proceeding on to China—presumably in the *Churchill* sloop. If possible, he was in any case to work southwards down the Pacific coast until he came to the latitude of Hudson House and then to send back news of his success.

The Committee's plans were largely inspired by 'the very indistinct account that has been received of the recent Perigrinations of *Peter Pond* and the *Canadian Traders* to Slave Lake'. Beyond Athabaska Lake nothing was clear, and the Committee were anxious to ascertain the facts and the possibilities. This was a most ambitious project, which reveals the Hudson's Bay Company as taking its part in that move to re-orient the concepts of British imperialism which followed the failure to keep the American colonies within the Empire. Essentially this was a move to emphasise trade with India, China and the Far East, as a counterbalance to the loss of colonies of settlement (and of governance) in North America. It was not new in itself, only in its emphasis; and in some sort it harked back to the fifteenth-century plans, when trade rather than settlement had

dominated men's minds. The new search for an empire of trade, rather than of governance, like the earlier version of the same theme, toyed with visions of Far Cathay, and of a route thither. Into the story were woven the Russian Bering's exploration of Bering's Sea and Strait, the Northwesters' expedition to the mouth of the Mackenzie River under Alexander Mackenzie, Vancouver's exploration of the Pacific Coast, and the patient search for *Terra Australis Incognita*, the southern continent and a passage to reach it, under James Cook.

Charles Duncan's expedition might well have been an important chapter in this story of the search which was rising about the year 1790. But two things were against him. Chesterfield Inlet, which was to be his point of departure into the unknown, really was the *cul de sac* which Middleton had pronounced it to be; and the sloop *Churchill* did not come up to his requirements. He sailed from the Orkneys in May 1790, convinced himself as he crossed the Atlantic that Buss Island could not exist, reached Cape Charles on 1st August and sighted Marble Island on 21st. There he found no minerals or mines, not even any marble! And his compasses lost their power. Off the place where Corbet's Inlet should have been, according to Ellis, Dobbs and the Company's detractors of the previous generation, he found nothing but a continuous low coast. So, finding his sloop unfit for service, the coast apparently closed and the season so far advanced, Duncan returned to Churchill and so to England.

It was a futile end to a project which, as we can now see, was foredoomed in any case to failure. But that the London Committee should have had time for such a proposal in 1790 shows that they were ready to re-examine the conclusions to which they had always clung about the North-west Passage—conclusions which were in fact substantially correct—and that even in the height of their planning to outpace the Northwesters they were ready to undertake such an expedition.

As events proved, less pretentious projects achieved more, both in the way of discovery and of trade. While Isham set up his post at Swan River, Stayner set out from Cumberland for the Rockies, and Turnor prepared Fidler for a voyage to Athabaska and Slave Lake; from Osnaburgh the first new small outposts were set up on Red Paint Lake and Cat Lake; from Henley John Hodgson plotted a road to Lake St. Ann's and on to explore Lake Wepiscuacow. Gloucester House, as part of the new policy of mobility, was moved to Martin's Fall, and from Eastmain expeditions went inland to visit the Canadian posts, inspired by the invitations of the Indians

and their complaints of the harsh treatment which the Canadians gave them. Brunswick was ordered to be abandoned as soon as convenient, and the small and even abortive expeditions and changes undertaken at this time should be taken into account in forming an opinion of the way in which the Company reacted to the flamboyant expansion of the Northwesters.

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CHAPTER VI

RIVALRY TO THE ARCTIC

During the ten years which followed after the reformation of the North West Company in 1787 the fur trade carried the trappers' frontier down the rivers of the north to the Arctic Ocean and over the Rockies to the Pacific. It took the first white men across the North American continent, brought new and essentially different Indian tribes into contact with European notions of trade and property, and in so doing it broached problems of settlement and of control which are fundamental to almost a century of Canadian history.

In this march across the continent it was the North West Company which carried the banner, and the leader was Alexander Mackenzie. He was, however, a Northwester with a difference, and in the long run his ideas were as important as his achievements. For the strong mark of the North West Company, as it was reorganised in 1787, was the great power wielded by the agents, the financiers and shippers, McTavish, Frobisher and Co. This was a feature perpetuated in subsequent arrangements; the heart of the North West Company beat in Montreal, its arteries lay from Montreal to London and from Montreal to the Grand Portage. But Alexander Mackenzie never succumbed to the dominance of the Montreal agents, and he never accepted the dominance of the Montreal routes.

With something of an education behind him and with a great and stubborn courage within him, Alexander Mackenzie arrived in Montreal in 1779 at the age of fifteen or sixteen. At the age of ten he had been brought to New York by his father. Had he stayed to grow up at Stornoway, where he was born, he might well have followed so many of the islanders and have gone to the Bay in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. As it was, he entered the firm of Gregory and McLeod, and there served as a clerk for five years.

The peace with the United States had not yet completely cut off the southern trade from Montreal and the Canadian merchants, and in 1784 John Gregory sent Mackenzie with a trade outfit to Detroit. That was the year in which Gregory and McLeod entered into partnership with Peter Pangman in rivalry with the newly-formed North West Company, and young Mackenzie was recalled from

Detroit, sent up to Grand Portage and thence to Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1785. He had been made a full partner in the new concern while his cousin Roderick, who had arrived in Canada in 1784, was engaged as an apprentice-clerk. Both shared the bitter rivalry with the Northwesters which culminated in the murder of John Ross (also a partner), the trial of Peter Pond and the amalgamation of the two concerns in the re-formed North West Company of 1787.

As a partner in the firm of Gregory and McLeod, Alexander Mackenzie was given a share in the North West Company in 1787 and, having shown his endurance and his capacity, was sent up to manage the troublesome outpost in Athabaska. He arrived at Pond's 'Old Establishment' in October 1787, apparently with the purpose of winding up the Company's commitments there. But a winter spent with Peter Pond left him convinced of the actual value of the Athabaska posts (Pond's 'Old Establishment' on the Athabaska River and the outposts at Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake and at Fort Providence further north), and by 1788, when Pond left Athabaska for the last time, Mackenzie was persuading his cousin Roderick to come up to Athabaska and maintain that district as a base from which the sort of expedition to the Arctic which Pond had envisaged might be undertaken.

In this Alexander Mackenzie was undoubtedly building upon the knowledge and the convictions which Pond had got from Indian reports. He was also basing his plans upon the existing organisation of the North West Company. In this a noteworthy feature was the way in which the abundant meat of the prairie country was traded, and brought in the form of pemmican, from the posts on the upper Saskatchewan, Peace River and Athabaska River, to stock the posts below and so to make possible the swift and certain passage of the brigades of canoes through the forest belt from Lake Winnipeg to Grand Portage. The supply line not only made swift passage to the posts of Athabaska possible but also cleared the route for further exploration, and was incorporated by Mackenzie into his plans.

Mackenzie, however, went further than a simple desire to use the backing of the North West Company so as to explore the great river running north from Great Slave Lake, of which Pond had told him. When Pond had first been seized with this idea, in 1785, he had put forward his proposal to find a route to the 'North Pacific Ocean' as a counter-check to the moves of Russia and of the United States in that direction, and had coupled his proposal to a plea that the North West Company should be given a monopoly of the trade. For Pond the animus against American or Russian advances was little more

than an additional argument to bring pressure to bear on the government, and he made his projects known also in America and in Russia. With a far more deliberately national outlook Alexander Mackenzie had the same sort of notion in his mind, at this juncture and throughout his career. For it was common knowledge in Quebec and Montreal that Peter Pond's idea lay still at the back of the project which Mackenzie had inherited, that 'their Views in taking these pains proceed from the hope that if they succeed in penetrating to the Ocean, Government may be induced to grant them a Charter and Exclusive Right in the lucrative Furr trade in those parts'.

At what stage in his career Mackenzie developed his own individual version of these two ideas of Peter Pond's is not certain. But at a later date he made it clear that he had become convinced that the route to the north-west, and the monopoly, should entail the side-tracking of Montreal, and so of the Montreal agents. He had become an advocate of the view that the whole trade must be 'blended in one common Interest' and that 'the most practicable Rout to the Northwest was thro' the territories of the Hudsons Bay Company', by which the immense journey by lake and river from Montreal would be avoided. Canadians, however, would still be necessary for the trade even though Canada should be side-tracked and the furs of the north-west taken for shipment to the Pacific coast (and so perhaps to a market in China) instead of to the St. Lawrence. Such a concept may well have been in Mackenzie's mind in 1789, for Pond at some stage heard of Cook's third voyage, to the North American coast, and revised his more correct notions of the Slave River flowing northwards into notions of a river flowing south-westwards from Great Slave Lake and passing round the northern tip of the Rockies into the Pacific.

Having seen his cousin Roderick transfer the business of Pond's 'Old Establishment' to the new Fort Chipewyan on the south shore of Athabaska Lake, thereby to some extent interrupting the Chipewyans' trade to Churchill, Alexander set off from the new post on 3rd June, 1789. He was accompanied by four Canadians, two of whom were attended by their 'wives', and by 'a German'. The English Chief, so-called because he habitually traded with the Hudson's Bay men at Churchill, accompanied the party in his own small canoe. He was a follower of Matonabee and knew of Hearne's journey to the mouth of the Coppermine River—which may perhaps indicate that Mackenzie expected that his journey might bring him to the Arctic Ocean. There was also a canoe full of trade-goods, to re-establish the post at Fort Providence, on

the north shore of Great Slave Lake, which Mackenzie had closed down.

It was 10th July before Mackenzie reached the mouth of the great river which bears his name. He had been held by ice in Great Slave Lake and then spent some days searching the north shore of that lake before he found the entry into the Mackenzie. He found the Dog-rib and the Slave Indians unaccustomed to tobacco, and he noted the habits of the Hare Indians and of the Quarrellers as he passed them. Most significant is his note, after he had himself been convinced that he was on a river which emptied into the 'Hyperborean Sea', that his men were only kept going by their hope of penetrating to the *Mer d'ouest*.

The river had eventually led him to what he considered was a frozen lake and, his guide being useless, he spent a couple of days trying to find an outlet. It was not until the rising tide had wet his baggage, and whales had been seen off-shore, that Mackenzie realised he had reached the sea. A post, with his observation of the latitude, $69^{\circ} 14' N.$, his name, the number of men he had with him and the length of his stay, commemorated the event, though his Journal does not record the statement as such.

The fact that he had brought his party to the Arctic instead of to the Pacific was probably a great disappointment to Mackenzie, though he does not explicitly say so in his Journal. On his return journey he was constantly trying to get information of a river 'on the other side of the mountains to the South-West'. He had already been told that the Eskimos had met white men in boats to the westwards, and had traded with them, and he got one Indian to draw in the sand a 'singular map' which showed a white man's fort on a long spit of land. So Mackenzie concluded he was being shown Unalaska Fort, that the river described to the west of him must be Cook's River, and that the sea into which Mackenzie River discharges must communicate with Norton Sound. But the Indian refused to accompany him across the mountains, and Mackenzie had battled his way up-stream and was back at Fort Chipewyan by 12th September. His Journal has no clear statement that he realised he must have reached the Arctic Ocean, but he clearly appreciated that he had not got to the Pacific. A later note made by him takes a constructive view of the fact 'Tho I was disappointed in this it proved without a doubt that there is not a north west passage below this latitude and I believe it will generally be allowed that no passage is practicable in a Higher Latitude the sea being eternally covered with ice'. In 1789 his disappointment was more simple, and it was shared by his partners in

the North West Company. Mackenzie had not got to the Pacific. So, when he came out to Grand Portage in 1790 (after spending the winter at Fort Chipewyan with his cousin Roderick) he wrote that his journey was hardly mentioned at the meeting of the partners, and that this was what he had expected.

But although Mackenzie had not achieved such a vindication of Pond's notions as would justify a demand for government support and a monopoly for the North West Company, he had arranged the reorganisation of the vital Athabaska posts, and he had accomplished a journey which put him in a class apart even among such men. When the North West Company was again reorganised in July 1790, at a meeting held at Grand Portage, Mackenzie was present, and he was allotted two of the twenty shares into which the concern was then divided.

The new agreement was to run for seven years, from 1792 to 1799, and like its predecessor it was dominated by the Montreal agents. McTavish, Frobisher and Co. held six shares once more, and their satellite Nicholas Montour two, and William McGillivray (nephew and dependent of McTavish) one. McTavish, Frobisher and Co. were to conduct all the business at Montreal and to import all necessary supplies at a five per cent. commission plus interest on the sums advanced. They were also to ship all fur returns to England at a commission of a half per cent. The partnership was to apply only to the North West trade and not to other ventures in which the members might be involved; and within the district to which he was allotted each of the partners agreed to trade only on behalf of the concern. It was arranged that Mackenzie should buy the second share which he was now allotted from George McBeath, and other similar purchases were also arranged, to bring the partnership to its desired form.

This reorganisation of 1790 was kept secret. It was not to come into effect until 1792, and in the meantime Alexander Mackenzie had returned to spend another winter, 1790-1, in Athabaska. He had moved the post which had been set up on Great Slave Lake to a position on Mackenzie River, and in so doing he gave instructions that information should be sought concerning the river to the westward which ran to the Pacific. His mind was running in that direction, and when he had taken his returns down to the meeting of the partners at Grand Portage in 1791 he continued on to Montreal and to England so as to prepare for his great ambition, as yet unfulfilled, the crossing of the continent.

The event which turned Mackenzie's purpose, from an active but

distant ambition to reach the Pacific into an immediate plan to spend the winter learning surveying in England, was that on the way down to Grand Portage he had fallen in with Philip Turnor. He and Turnor were already known to each other, for in 1790 the Hudson's Bay Surveyor had been at Cumberland House in preparation for the expedition thence to Athabaska and Slave Lake. There at Cumberland the Northwesters called, in June 1790 on their journey down to Grand Portage—Patrick Small from Ile-à-la-Crosse, Angus Shaw from Moose Hill Lake, William McGillivray from Lac la Ronge, and Alexander Mackenzie from Fort Chipewyan. Turnor had already reported the rumour of Mackenzie's journey. Now he met him, talked with him, and wrote in his Journal 'Mr. McKensie says he has been at the Sea, but thinks it is the Hyperborean Sea but he does not seem acquainted with Observations which makes me think he is not well convinced where he has been'. Mackenzie had called on Turnor again on his way inland at the end of August—and tried to collect a debt of fat which the Hudson's Bay men had borrowed from the Northwesters in 1787. Again in June 1791, as he was on his way out to the Grand Portage, he met Turnor in Peter Pond Lake (or Buffalo Lake) north-west of Ile-à-la-Crosse. At these recurrent interviews, at each of which they camped together for a night, the two vastly different explorers exchanged information and ideas. Turnor's method of exploring struck Mackenzie as 'ill-provided'; and indeed Turnor was lacking in the pemmican and other food which the Northwesters would have had. He was even short of oatmeal and had been forced to hunt rabbits all the winter of 1790-1 and had to beg a suitable fishing net from the Northwesters at Ile-à-la-Crosse. The Company's ambitions to penetrate into Athabaska were, as Turnor realised 'heartily laughed at by the Canadian Gents'. But Turnor also had his merits. At least he knew exactly where he was, and his careful approach, surveying as he went, had great advantages. Peter Fidler and even Malchom Ross had 'both turned Astronomers, and have wrote for Sextants, watches etc' under Turnor's tuition. Both by precept and practice Turnor must therefore have pointed out to Mackenzie the grave defect in his equipment for exploration, and it was after meeting Turnor, Fidler and Malchom Ross, all able to take a reading in a way which he could not achieve, that Mackenzie decided to spend the winter of 1791-2 in England, mastering that art.

The effect of the Hudson's Bay men in diverting Mackenzie to England was equalled by Mackenzie's influence in riveting the attention of Turnor and the Hudson's Bay explorers upon

Athabaska. Turnor was warned by Mackenzie that he would find no food to support him as he went from Ile-à-la-Crosse over Portage la Loche (Methy portage) and down the Clearwater River to Athabaska. This was a direct comment on the lack of 'pemmican posts' in the prairies to help on the Hudson's Bay brigades, and it obliged Turnor to take his party by a more southern route, longer but well provisioned with moose and buffalo, by way of Swan Lake (now Garson Lake). Hunting was reasonably good on this route, but the rivers were difficult and at times dangerous, and the Chipewyan guides were in strange country, were not good canoe-men in bad water, and were disheartened (especially when a splendid gun, with which the chief guide was rewarded, burst badly). Yet Turnor pushed his party from Swan Lake into the Pelican, or Clearwater, River and so to the Forks of the Athabaska and north to the Lake, and Fort Chipewyan, which he reached on 28th June, 1791.

Chipewyan greatly impressed Turnor, as well it might. With at least a two-years' supply of trade goods in hand it was indeed 'the Grand Magazine of the Athapiscow Country', and Roderick Mackenzie was a kindly and cultured host. But though relations were friendly it was clear that interests were at variance. The Northwesters were convinced that Turnor was intent only on discovery, and that he was badly equipped for that purpose. So Alexander Mackenzie had reported of the expedition. Turnor and Ross, on the other hand, both became convinced as they saw the Northwesters' system from close at hand that the Hudson's Bay Company would never achieve anything until the North West system had been adopted. Athabaska Lake was the heart of the problem. There, Turnor reported, 'is the bulwark of the Canadian Company as they carry from that Country about twenty Thousand made Beaver mostly in winter Beaver with a few good Martens etc.' But both he and Ross agreed that Chipewyan, or any post on Athabaska Lake, could only be a centre for furs and for intelligence. The men could indeed subsist through the winter on fish from the lake; but for the post to be well established and for its canoes to be certain of the pemmican which would give them swift and certain travel, a subsidiary post among the Beaver Indians up Peace River would be essential.

Turnor then argued that 'all discoveries must be begun from inland, and prosecuted downwards', and volunteered that if six Canadians were sent up to him at Cumberland he would come back to Athabaska and would then 'prosecute further discoveries' to find the way from Athabaska down to the coast either by way of the

Nelson or the Churchill River. He was convinced that this was practicable, that materials for canoe-making abounded in Athabaska and Peace River, and that the route would be about two hundred miles shorter than that by way of Cumberland. But when in 1791 he continued down-river to Great Slave Lake (and so made contact with Samuel Hearne's route to Churchill on his way back from the Coppermine) Turnor could glean no report of a river running north except Mackenzie River, though he was diligently enquiring for some such access to Chesterfield Inlet as Captain Duncan had been sent to seek. Turnor was, in fact, sceptical of the idea of an approach from Chesterfield Inlet, for having made an accurate observation of the latitude of Athabaska Lake ($58^{\circ} 37' 34''$) he knew that the London Committee were out in their reckoning, and that the best hope was to find a route from the eastern end of Lake Athabaska to Churchill. He proposed to winter at Athabaska and explore anew in 1792.

The winter in a small post near Fort Chipewyan started on most amicable terms with the Northwesters, but as the months wore on Turnor and his men became more critical of the Canadians' methods of trading and of treating the Indians (especially where their women were concerned) while the Indians began to seek assurances that the Hudson's Bay men would come again to settle and trade, and to adopt an increasingly independent attitude towards the Northwesters. Even the mild and friendly Roderick Mackenzie in the end protested at Turnor's post being so near to his as to disturb the Indians. The danger could clearly be seen when the Chipewyans from Slave River sent to ask Peter Fidler to spend the winter with them and he, ever anxious to improve his knowledge, did so most successfully.

Even by dint of carrying his goods over the ice to the mouth of the Athabaska River, so that he should not be held in the lake by driving ice when the river broke, Turnor could not start on his return journey to York Fort in 1792 until 9th May. He went by the known route, past Ile-à-la-Crosse, over Methy Portage and to Cumberland House. There he found a fine new house being built, plenty of furs; and very few trade-goods. He was hunting and fishing for the pot as he went, having no supplies from any pemmican posts, and was outdistanced on the journey by the Northwesters taking their furs down to Grand Portage. But he and his men were by now experienced travellers; they made a good journey and they arrived at York Fort on 17th July, to find all well and not a single canoe yet departed for the inland posts.

This should have meant that Turnor, Malchom Ross and Peter Fidler, with their great knowledge and experience, and with their firm convictions on the need to oppose the Northwesters in Athabaska, had arrived in time for those views to be put into effect for the outfits of 1792. But although Turnor himself offered to go in to Athabaska again, the Council at York rejected the proposal, and he was left convinced that Tomison, the powerful 'Inland Master' at York, had set his face against any undertaking to the northward from Cumberland.

This was but the climax of Turnor's feeling that those in effective command at York were not alive to the problems of Athabaska, and were discriminating against attempts to push the Company's trade there. Throughout his journey he had felt that important supplies and equipment had been denied him, and had complained bitterly of the dangerous straits to which he had been reduced. He could do no good in such a situation, and after a last trip up the Nelson and Grass rivers he returned to England in the autumn of 1792, there to complete his maps and to set himself up as an instructor in navigation. His relations with the Company remained most friendly. But although he had posed the problem of Athabaska in clear and unmistakable terms, he had not been able to carry his remedies into effect.

When he had been suffering the privations of his journey, Turnor had imputed the lack of support to the apathy of Joseph Colen, the 'Resident' at York, though he also began to wonder whether William Tomison, the 'Inland Chief', realised the importance of settling and supplying a post in Athabaska. For Malchom Ross had gone with Turnor so that he could remain to trade, and had taken a meagre supply of trade-goods with him, but Tomison made no attempt to replenish his supplies in 1792 and the Chipewyans could not in fairness be given the vital assurance that the Company would come and make a *permanent* establishment among them. By the time he began his homeward journey Turnor had become convinced that Tomison had never intended that a trade should be carried into Athabaska, and his reception when he got back to York Factory confirmed his view.

But although Turnor and his men were then persuaded that Colen was blameless in this matter, so that Turnor apologised for his censures and Ross noted Colen as 'the ornament of this north part of the Bay by his unwearied attention to both public and private affairs', they were not quite right in their assessment. For it was a rivalry between the two governors from which the Athabaska pro-

ject suffered. Each was jealous of the other, each had his own fixed ideas of the proper methods of conducting the trade, and each was indifferent to Turnor's proposals for Athabaska.

William Tomison, with his great experience in the founding of Cumberland, Hudson House, the South Branch, Manchester House and Buckingham House, was intent upon the organisation of trade on the Saskatchewan in opposition to the Pedlars. In this he was purposeful, energetic and sensible. His first year in command as 'Inland Chief', 1786, had seen Robert Longmoor sent to establish Manchester House on the North Branch of the Saskatchewan and Mitchell Oman sent to establish South Branch House on the other branch. When South Branch House was destroyed by Indians in 1794, Tomison replaced it by Carlton House, and while Turnor was in Athabaska Tomison was engaged in the rebuilding of Cumberland and of Hudson House (which had been abandoned in 1786), in a constant tour of his posts, and in plans to build Buckingham House, which he started in the autumn of 1792 since the Canadians had built sixty miles above Cumberland and again 'near to the Moose Hills', at Fort George. He had in mind always that early determination which had led to the building of Hudson House—to go as far as the Canadians—and he was engaged on a project for getting supplies up to the Saskatchewan so as to arrive before the Northwesters, give the Indians debt and get them out to their hunts before the opposition could get at them.

Here Tomison had reached to the fundamentals of his problem. The defect was that his vision did not extend beyond the Saskatchewan and into Athabaska; but he was constructive and purposeful in his determination to speed up transportation so as every year to win the race to the Indians. To achieve this, in 1794, he ordered the building of Gordon House (the Rock Depot) up Hill River from York Fort. There Colen met him with the outfits for the ensuing winter and took the furs down to York while Tomison hastened back inland, having saved about a week by using the Depot.

How far the initiative for Rock Depot came from Colen, and how far from Tomison is not clear. Both were involved, and certainly Tomison welcomed the innovation. He was less concerned with the other great change of this time, for he was a strong advocate of canoes, and the change came when in 1795 the Company's transport system was further improved and simplified when George Sutherland 'launched boats into the Saskatchewan' and so gave the Company's men there a considerable advantage even over those 'natural water Dogs' the Canadians. Tomison himself seems to have been

very conservative about such changes; he opposed the building of large canoes, and the change to boats was made during his absence in England. But the Rock Depot was a considerable advantage, and with this system to help him, Tomison was able to move further inland still; in 1795 he went up past Buckingham House, travelled overland to rejoin the river higher up, and began a new post just above 'where the Canada Companies has built Houses during the Summer'. Timber for building was exceedingly scarce at the site which he chose, on the north bank of the river, but Tomison wintered there, in the first Edmonton House, raised in opposition to the North-westers' Fort Augustus.

So by the time he went on leave to England, in the autumn of 1795, Tomison had established the Company's trade to the Saskatchewan, and its transport system, in a most sensible and effective manner. There could be no question of his loyalty or of his capacity. The only problem lay in the undoubted fact that his vision was limited and that he did not accept Turnor's view that Athabaska was the key to the rivalry and that 'while the Canadians can keep this part they need not fear an opposition in any other part, and I have heard some of them declare that while they can draw the attention of the Honble Companies Servants up the Sask-ash-a-wan or to Southern parts they can afford to oppose them at a trifling loss so long as they can keep the North to themselves'.

If the truculent and purposeful Tomison was devoted to what Turnor classed as southern trade, his subordinate and rival, Joseph Colen, was equally indifferent to the claims of Athabaska. He managed to explain to Turnor and to Malchom Ross that it was not he who had cut the supplies for their expedition. But for the most part he was taken up with the rebuilding of the fort at York, and with the trade from its immediate hinterland to the south and west. In so far as he gazed further afield, he was taken up with the problems of what came to be called the Muskrat country. This was an area described by David Thompson as 'a space from Hudson's Bay of about three hundred miles in width'. For Thompson the distinction of the Muskrat country was its geological character, the 'granite and other silicious Rocks' of which it was formed, and the resultant swamps and predominance of moss and of trees with no tap-roots. For him it was an area running northwards from the St. Lawrence to the Bay, and bounded to the west by Lake Superior, Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Winnipeg, Cedar Lake and the chain of lakes northwards to Athabaska and Great Slave Lake, while in the other direction it spread to the coast of Labrador. For Joseph Colen the

more immediately important part of this vast Muskrat country was the area between the Nelson and the Churchill Rivers, reaching down to the south-western edge of the Muskrat country at Sturgeon-weir River (Rivière Maligne). This was the territory of the Home-Guard Crees of York Fort, and it contained the possibility of a short route into Athabaska.

Colen, however, does not appear to have given much of his attention to the possibility of a route to Athabaska which the portion of the Muskrat country south and west of York held. His pre-occupation was with his own post and its trade. With his Home-Guard Crees from that area he had a long and friendly connection, and their trade had habitually come down to York. But from about 1783 onwards the Northwesters had begun to approach this area, and their reorganisation of 1787 was followed by a strong invasion. Their system was to send in a canoe or two and to build several small houses. It was a dispersed and fugitive trade in a thinly-peopled area, but when Malchom Ross passed that way on his journey from Churchill to Cumberland he estimated that the Northwesters took out about 13,000 skins a year. The success of the Northwesters depended on their preventing the Crees from taking their furs down to York to pay the debts which they had taken up, and rum was the great staple of their trade. This William McGillivray dispensed lavishly during his three years in the Muskrat country, from 1787 to 1790, and Colen could make no effective counter. But the Chipewyans who crossed the Barren Lands to trade at Churchill could not be drawn into McGillivray's net—in part because, as Turnor had noted, they were not accustomed to spirits; in part because they were afraid to venture into Cree territory. An outpost from the Muskrat country to accommodate the Chipewyans, at Reindeer Lake, lasted for but a year or so, and the strong personality of William McGillivray was withdrawn from the Muskrat country in 1790 when he bought Peter Pond's share and became a partner of the North West Company, in charge of their English River Department and stationed at Ile-à-la-Crosse. His energy and the pre-occupations of Joseph Colen between them ensured that the Muskrat country did not provide the Hudson's Bay men with a route into Athabaska.

The Committee's more direct plan to find such a route was also frustrated. Captain Duncan had returned to England after his failure to find such a route in 1790. The Committee received him well, accepted his statement that the *Churchill* sloop was inadequate, arranged with the Admiralty that he should be continued in the

Company's employment for two years, and sent him out again in the *Beaver* brig from England. Once more he went to Churchill, not to York. But he was obstructed by Robert Longmoor, who ought to have gone with him as interpreter, and was unable to set off that year, 1791. The Committee sympathised with him deeply, and renewed his instructions in 1792, when he got to Seal River and explored some distance up it. The river lay to the north of Churchill and might have provided a route to Athabaska, but Duncan left his task unfinished, to be taken up by more normal servants of the Company—in fact by Peter Fidler in the following year.

While Captain Duncan was thus failing to find a route from Churchill into Athabaska, and the Northwesters were disputing the Muskrat country, Colen's attention was focused on the country immediately to the south and west of York. There also the Northwesters were in opposition, with posts on Cross Lake, Lake Sipiwesk and Paint Lake. Colen sent James Spence in 1790 to build Lake House on Split Lake, at the mouth of Burntwood River, and in 1791 he sent William Hemmings Cook to build Chatham House on Wintering Lake, in opposition to the Northwesters' post on Paint Lake. This, said Turnor, was the only opposition which the Canadians met in the whole territory north of Cumberland, and they took out between forty and fifty thousand skins a year from the territory between Cumberland and the coast.

As such, Chatham House attracted Turnor's attention, especially when he had come to take a favourable view of Colen and his projects and an adverse view of Tomison. He was easily persuaded to explore the Nelson River up to the mouth of the Burntwood, and Chatham House, in the interval between his return to York and the arrival of the ship in 1792. For Turnor it was a small and easy journey, but he learned of an Indian report that the Burntwood River was navigable up to a portage which led into the Churchill River. So it might well prove to be a much better and shorter route to Athabaska than that by way of Cumberland House; there might, also, be a way to Athabaska Lake by way of Reindeer Lake. Thus Turnor's zeal to find a way to Athabaska and Joseph Colen's pre-occupation with trade to the south of York came together in a purpose to explore the Nelson and Burntwood Rivers—and Turnor's former pupil David Thompson was called upon to carry out the survey.

The Grey Coat School apprentice whom Philip Turnor had taught to survey was by 1793 ready to play a great part in the expansion of the fur-trade rivalry into Athabaska, and even further into the west.

He had started his apprenticeship in 1784 by being sent to Churchill, with special instructions that he should be kept from the common men and that his mathematical education should be put to use by employing him in keeping the accounts and in occasionally making observations; his morals and behaviour were to be carefully looked after. Next year he was ordered to go from Churchill to York, where an assistant writer was much needed; he made the journey of about a hundred and fifty miles on foot. At Churchill he had been under Samuel Hearne, at York Humphrey Marten was his master; so Thompson came to know the virtues and the defects of the Company's two great post-masters, and he was at York in 1786 when the Committee took their decisions to make Tomison 'Chief Inland' and to send Malchom Ross up the Churchill River in an attempt to sharpen up their rivalry with the Northwesters.

Thompson was fitted out with a meagre equipment of clothing and was sent inland with Longmoor, to help in setting up the posts which Tomison planned for the Upper Saskatchewan; he wintered 1786-7 at South Branch House and in 1787 helped to build Manchester House, the furthest expansion of the Company's trade, beyond which lay only one post, occupied by Edward Umfreville on behalf of the Northwesters. In the rivalry for the friendship, and for the furs, of the Piegiens and Blackfeet among whom they were settled, Thompson was sent out to winter south-west of Bow River, near the site of the present Calgary. He was still only seventeen years old, and is an example of the way in which the Company's use of apprentices was capable of giving early experience and training in the skills required for the fur trade. But it must be admitted that Thompson himself girded at the apprentice system—'To learn what; for all I had seen in their service neither writing nor reading was required. And my only business was to amuse myself, in winter growling at the cold and in the open season shooting Gulls, Ducks, Plover and Curlews, and quarelling with Musketoos and Sand flies'.

From Manchester House he returned down to Hudson House and there, in the summer of 1788, he broke his leg in an accident with a log. Badly set, the injury appeared likely to prevent him from ever taking part in prolonged inland travel again. So although he had already given evidence of his capacity as a surveyor, and he spent the winter of 1789-90 under Turnor's instructions, Turnor decided that Peter Fidler would be a better companion for his journey into Athabaska, and Fidler was given a hurried course in surveying (at which he proved an apt pupil) while Thompson finished the year at Cumberland and then in 1791 went down to York Fort. His

apprenticeship was now ended and the Company took him on as a salaried servant at £15 a year. But instead of the clothes to which he was entitled at this time Thompson asked that he might be given a brass sextant.

Thompson was apparently finding the use of his broken leg again, and being useful about the post and in the rebuilding, until Turnor came down to York in 1792. He had already gone inland the short distance to Chatham House, and in view of Thompson's abilities it is surprising that Joseph Colen should need to ask Turnor to survey that route. Certainly, when Turnor had gone home and Thompson had shewn that his leg was serviceable again, there could be no doubt who would be chosen to follow up Turnor's suggestion and seek a route to Athabaska from York via the Nelson River and the Burntwood. In the opinion of Joseph Colen he was 'a deserving Young Man and in Morals and behaviour is worthy imitation for I never have yet heard him use an Indecent expression, or smoke a pipe,—he is in my humble opinion, the most correct observer I have seen in this Country'.

Thompson's orders were to explore the Nelson River route, not to establish a post. But he was to accompany the small brigade of canoes up to Chatham House. Then he was to go on as far as he could get his Indians to go, searching for a way by Reindeer Lake to Athabaska. Colen thought it probable, in fact, that Thompson would not get beyond Reindeer Lake and ordered him, should it prove so, then to explore the route down to Churchill, and so back to York. In this Colen seems to have been pursuing the major objective which the Committee had in mind, but he has been blamed because Thompson, as it turned out, spent the winter 1792-3 at a small post which he built on Sipiwesk Lake. Here he was short of provisions and dependent on William Hemmings Cook at Chatham House. It was not an auspicious send-off for further exploration in the spring of 1793 and, failing to get any Indians to accompany him, Thompson returned back to York in that year.

The failure to find a Nelson River—Burntwood and Reindeer Lake route to Athabaska left the initiative once more with Tomison and his devotion to the Saskatchewan posts. On his return to York in 1793 Thompson was sent up to Cumberland and so to Buckingham House, where he spent the winter. Malchom Ross, the veteran traveller, was with him; but their original purpose, of which the Committee approved, had been to push once more from Chatham House into Athabaska. The Committee had accepted the view that 'it will not answer to the Company to go to the Athe-pas-cow Lake

by Cumberland House' and Ross (with Fidler named as his companion) was to seek a route from York up Nelson River and so into Churchill River. The diversion to Buckingham House seems to have been due to the intervention of Tomison, and Colen complained bitterly that 'these transactions happened many hundreds of miles distance from us, and with much secrecy'. Tomison seems to have stopped the expedition by refusing the men extra wages (as he had stopped Turnor's proposed expedition in 1792), and the disappointment was such that Ross would have resigned had not Thompson persuaded him to stay and to start a small outpost to the north of Cumberland, at Nipawi—a poor little venture quickly closed for lack of provisions. Thompson himself travelled around in the Muskrat country, near Muskrat River.

Thompson and Ross both came down to York again in the summer of 1794, both convinced that the Company must find some route into Athabaska to supersede the long detour by Cumberland from York. But although the Committee were equally anxious for such a change in route, Tomison was in that year organising his Rock Depot for the first time and was busily engaged on the Saskatchewan, so that Colen was able without opposition to send Ross, Thompson and Cook, back into the Muskrat country to rescue the trade of York from the Northwesters. Malchom Ross in fact appears to have started off with the purpose of discovering the Reindeer Lake route into Athabaska but to have allowed himself to be diverted by the pleas of the Indians into setting up a post for them at Reed Lake, so perhaps Joseph Colen was (as he maintained) not entirely to blame, and he seems even to have expected the approbation of the Committee for 'the steps pursued . . . in the exploring a new track towards the Athabaska country'. Certainly nothing was accomplished towards discovering a route, and in 1795 the Committee were pointed and purposeful in urging both York and Churchill to press on the discovery.

So in July 1795 Ross and Thompson were again sent off from York, with four large canoes loaded with trade-goods. They went up the Nelson to Split Lake and so to Burntwood River, over the Burntwood Carrying Place and the headwaters of the Churchill River to the point at which Reindeer River runs into Churchill River. This was indeed getting towards that route to Athabaska of which Turnor had written, and Ross made a small post, Fairford House, at the river junction, sixty-four miles from Reindeer Lake, and wintered there while Thompson wintered close at hand on Duck Portage. Then in 1796, while Ross took the returns from the two

posts down to York and then came back inland again, Thompson went on and at last made his way to Athabaska Lake.

At Fairford House there was no white man who could be spared to accompany Thompson, for the great war with France made recruitment difficult and men scarce—as Thompson in fairness realised, and as the Committee noted. This difficulty led to attempts to recruit Canadians and half-breeds, to the sending out of books from which the children at the posts might be taught to read, and to the payment of up to £45 for outfit for an Orkney labourer. The remedies could not, in the nature of things, produce an immediate supply of men, but Thompson recruited two young Chipewyans who knew the country he was to travel, although they had never been on the rivers and lakes in summer and did not know how to handle a canoe. Even so, nothing was ready for the expedition, and Thompson and his Indians had to make their own canoe, seventeen feet long. When they set off on 10th June, 1796, their chief dependence was on the fact that they had a fishing net of thirty fathoms and one gun with forty balls, five pounds of shot, three flints and five pounds of powder. Thompson had been taught to travel light and to live on the country, and like so many Hudson's Bay voyages, before and since, this vital expedition of 1796 had to 'hunt its way'.

From Fairford, at its confluence with the Churchill River, Thompson and his two Indians made their way up Reindeer River and into Reindeer Lake. There he marked out a stand of fine pine trees on the north-west shore as the site for a future house (Bedford House). So he proceeded to Manito Lake (Wollaston Lake), whence one stream (Cochrane River) runs eastwards to Reindeer Lake and so to Churchill River, while from the west bank the Black River (or Stone River) flows to Lake Athabaska. Thompson was taking a water-route over the Height of Land and through the Barren Lands. Despite the appearance of luxury given by dwarf pines growing on the hills and islands, vegetation was scanty and stunted, and it was no surprise to him that the area round Reindeer Lake and Manito Lake should be unknown even to the Indians. It was 'a wretched country, full of solitude', but yet Thompson thought the Hudson's Bay Company should explore it, this 'rude barren country that has neither provisions nor furs'. He was himself, with his two untrained Indians and his utterly negligible outfit, on the point of shewing how well worth exploring it was.

A hundred and sixty-two miles (as he accurately reckoned) from Manito Lake Thompson ran into the eastern end of Athabaska Lake on 2nd July, 1796. It had been a journey of much danger, toil

and suffering, and the return was to be worse; for the canoe was upset at one fall, Thompson was almost drowned and was left with nothing but his gun, an axe, a pewter basin and a small tent. As clothing he had only his shirt and a thin vest, for he travelled naked from the waist down, being so often in and out of the water. But his sextant and papers were later recovered in their cork-lined box, he bound up his torn foot with a piece of the tent, and he struck fire from the flint of his gun. Living on berries, young gulls and even young eagles which they were able to take from nests, he and his companions were resigned to death (and Thompson had written out an account of the voyage on birch rind with charcoal) when they fell in with a Chipewyan family who fed them and traded them a little ammunition and a pair of shoes each, on credit.

So with joyful hearts they arrived again at Fairford House on 21st July. But even there it required all their endeavours to keep themselves alive until 26th August, when Malchom Ross came up again from York Fort with four canoes of goods. Together they then went back up to Reindeer Lake and there built Bedford House on the site which Thompson had previously chosen. Bedford House, however, was but a poor sort of log hut, 'the chimneys were of mud and coarse grass, but somehow did not carry off the smoke, and the Huts were wretched with smoke so that however bad the weather, we were glad to leave the Huts'.

It was an exceedingly bitter winter, 1796-7, and for food they were dependent entirely on their fishery in Reindeer Lake, but Ross and Thompson were busy and active. Some Chipewyans came in to trade, and Thompson noted their customs and appearance, and fell to wondering whether any northern peoples in Greenland, Iceland or Europe, used the bow as they did—and whether any inference could be drawn if the fact could be established. He and Ross hunted, took the blood temperature of the animals they killed, and examined their paunches and searched for the mosses and grasses which they found there to see whether diet explained their ability to live through an Arctic winter. But at the end of it came a letter from Joseph Colen to tell Thompson that 'however extensive the countries yet unknown yet he could not sanction any further surveys'.

This was too much for Thompson. His existing contract with the Company was up. He was paid the not unreasonable salary of £60 a year plus a bonus for inland service; his grievance was not over money or conditions, but simply over the kind of work, in travelling and surveying with reasonable support, for which he saw no prospect in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. So from Bedford

House he made his way to the nearest post of the Northwesters, that under Alexander Fraser at the outlet of Reindeer Lake. There he entered the service of the North West Company. He was sent out by the usual route and arrived at Grand Portage for the annual meeting of the concern, to be welcomed into his new employment by Alexander Mackenzie and William McGillivray as partners and agents, from whose experience as inland travellers and traders he expected the 'enlarged views' which he needed to support him.

Such is the simple and heroic story of Thompson's service with the Hudson's Bay Company, and of his departure from it, as told by himself. His *Narrative of his explorations in Western America* is a clearly written and attractive account of the magnificent contribution which he made to the discovery of western America—and his work was far from finished when he left the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. If anything were lacking to render it a classic in the history of Canada, that would be supplied by the editing of Dr. J. B. Tyrrell, who as a surveyor himself went over most of the ground covered by Thompson and brought to his task a combination of historical and topographical knowledge which is rare and fortunate. But even such a narrative has defects; they are the defects of the character of David Thompson, the man of all the virtues and none of the vices, who never smoked a pipe or used a swear word, but who was always right! The defect, and its danger, come out clearly in his account of his last winter in the Company's service, from which one gets the impression that he and Ross had gone up to Bedford House on Reindeer Lake as part of an agreed policy of pressing into Athabaska by that route, and that Colen's veto on further discovery set Thompson on his path to the Northwesters. But the Journal kept by Malchom Ross gives quite a different impression. Ross had come up from York to Fairford House determined to go on to Ile-à-la-Crosse, there to winter and perhaps to go from there to Athabaska in the spring. He was persuaded by Thompson to change his plan and to go to Reindeer Lake, and as winter wore on he resented the change more and more. His Journal is more detailed than Thompson's *Narrative*, and it is significant both in its additions and in its omissions. Ross, for example, makes no mention of any letter from Colen forbidding further exploration in general terms. But he does say that Thompson was ordered to take command of a post on Reindeer Lake, and that Thompson refused because he wanted to go back to Athabaska and complete his observations on Black Lake. Thompson persuaded Ross that the route he had followed would be practicable with large canoes, and they tried

it. It was lack of water in the river, not an order from Joseph Colen, which brought them back on their tracks to build and winter at Bedford House. The difference between the two men, and between their conclusions, was the difference between Thompson refusing to accept the impracticability of his route and blaming everything on Joseph Colen, and Malchom Ross concluding his Journal with 'Such is the country I was led blindfold into the last fall and Deserted by the person who led me'.

Such evidence, of course, does not in the least detract from the achievement of David Thompson in the exploration of Canada. But it does make it clear that in his *Narrative* he tended to justify his own opinions and actions, to write down the defects of the plans which he advocated even at the cost of suppressing data and experiences on the routes which he described, and to seek a scape-goat not in the hard facts of northern transportation but in the persons who insisted on accepting those facts. His treatment of other matters shows the same tendencies.

In writing of the message which told him that no more expeditions were to be undertaken by the Hudson's Bay Company, Thompson refers to Joseph Colen as 'The Resident at York Factory the most enlightened gentleman who had filled that situation'. Colen was in fact the first to hold that post! And Thompson was certainly already aware of the defects in Colen's character and management. When he had arrived at Grand Portage in 1797 he wrote to tell Colen that he was the author of letters of grievance against him which had been sent to the Committee in 1795, and that then 'not one half of the evils complained of were enumerated'; and he suspected that it was Colen who had cut off his supplies of books, who had prevented the Committee's letters of approbation, and who had even robbed him of his copy of the Nautical Almanack, so essential to a surveyor. So concluding that 'I once had the greatest respect for you', Thompson, now liberated, told his former Governor that 'from your peculiar manner of conduct, you are also one of those unfortunate men who will have many an acquaintance, but never a real friend'. Here there was revealed something of that uncompromising desire to 'speak his mind' which so often goes with the completely virtuous character. Thompson's letter to Colen could not, of course, have been written while he was a subordinate; but it was a gratuitous and useless letter to write after he had gained his freedom, and it reveals as much of the character of Thompson as of Colen.

But Thompson had been tried hard, both by the facts as he found them and by the personality of Colen. There can be no doubt at all

that Colen was more concerned for the rebuilding of York and for its trade than he was for exploration and for a route to Athabaska. That, after all, was his task: he was 'Resident' chief at York, and Tomison was 'Inland Chief'. So the trade of the Muskrat country was ever in his mind and even when he sent Ross and Thompson off to explore the Reindeer Lake route it was with the proviso that it might well prove better that it should be handed over to Churchill. Here there was involved a mixture of policy, for there was very good reason to suspect that the Reindeer Lake route never would prove practicable. Indeed, in the end that was the outcome of Thompson's journey to Athabaska—to prove that the Burntwood-Reindeer Lake route was too difficult, dangerous and sparsely peopled, and that it never could serve unless it was supported by provisions from outside, after the manner of the Northwesters. This was the inescapable conclusion from the journey and from the barren winter which Ross and Thompson had spent at Bedford House, and the feeling that Colen might perhaps have been right after all to put his own trade first must have been present in Thompson's mind even as he protested at Colen's conclusions.

But if Colen was perhaps to some extent justified in blowing cold on the Athabaska proposals he was certainly not justified in his methods. The complete lack of equipment, save for his own surveying instruments, with which Thompson set off in 1796, cannot be excused, especially when it is remembered that throughout this period Colen was in constant correspondence with a Committee who were urging a policy of mobility, exploration and expansion. Thompson later wrote that the Committee were lethargic and indifferent, that the Company did the least possible work in surveying and exploring, and then only under pressure from Alexander Dalrymple, Hydrographer to the Admiralty.

There was some weight behind Thompson's denunciation, but it remains a strongly partisan statement. For, while their trading methods and ambitions drove the Northwesters further and further towards the Arctic and the Pacific, they were little concerned with exploration as such except when they saw in it a means for winning governmental support; indeed they were so little concerned with surveying or exploration in any scientific sense that they could not even give a correct position for many of their own posts. They were, however, urgently expansive in a way which warranted the distinction from the Hudson's Bay Company; for that Company had still to reckon with a strongly entrenched body of opinion, and with a wealth of experience, which taught that trade by the Bay-side (if it

could be got) would be easier and probably cheaper than trade in the uplands. So the Company was not committed to any overriding policy of expanding its trade. It ventured further afield chiefly under the stimulus of rivalry. But its explorations, though badly equipped by comparison with the Northwesters, were planned, scientific and accurate, in a way in which those of the Northwesters were not. That, in a sense, was really David Thompson's grievance against the Company. A series of expeditions, planned with a definite object, had come to nothing. Spurred by rivalry, the Company had tried to find a satisfactory way from Churchill to Athabaska; and a judicious assessment of the results had left the conviction that the Burntwood route would not suffice. There the matter rested as far as the Company was concerned. But not for David Thompson, who would not accept that verdict. The very way in which the Company had engaged and trained him should have shewn Thompson that, as far as surveying and exploring went, such over-all condemnation as he uttered could not be justified. But he was disappointed, and for him the immediate future was unpromising. There was this much of truth in his statement—that for the moment he had proved that the immediate project upon which he was engaged was purposeless, and and that there was no urgent move to press forward to the north and the west. He could, in fact, see no reason why the Company should engage in the sort of exploration to which the necessities of the North West Company had committed that concern. In this he was right, for there was no such necessity, and his condemnation of the Company is but an angry and disappointed phrasing of this truth of the fur trade.

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CHAPTER VII

RIVALRY TO THE PACIFIC

Though the Company's attempt to find a northern route to Athabaska had failed, and had given something of substance to David Thompson's outcry as he went over to the Northwesters, this was not the only project of exploration on which the Company was engaged. True, for the most part such explorations were directly concerned with pushing the Company's posts out in rivalry with the Northwesters, as were the expansions from the Bottom of the Bay towards the Height of Land, or the advances up the Saskatchewan under Tomison. But the voyages from Churchill under Captain Duncan showed that the Company was involved not only in efforts to get through to Athabaska by water but also to get through to the Coppermine and so to the north Pacific. In this it was, as Thompson had claimed, under pressure from Alexander Dalrymple. So was every other body which might help in the realisation of his ideas. Deeply imbued, by his early service in the East India Company, some minor voyages which he had made, and the vast amount which he had read, with the concept of a Southern Continent and of a British route thither, Dalrymple had returned to England to lead the movement which sought to replace the difficulties of governing North American colonists by the profits of trading with the supposedly numerous and peaceful inhabitants of an undiscovered *Terra Australis Incognita*. The search for the continent, and for the route to reach it, had stemmed in its new form from Anson's voyage round the world in 1741-2; it to some extent preceded the loss of the American colonies and it to some extent profited from the situation created by the independence of those colonies.

Into such a movement must be fitted the voyages of Captain Cook. Well-connected with the Royal Society, well-read and forceful, Dalrymple was instrumental in pushing forward the first voyage of 1768-9, in which Cook was sent to observe the *Transit of Venus* at Tahiti (as William Wales was sent to Churchill) and then to cruise into the south Pacific and search for the continent. Nothing but the Admiralty's insistence that a real sailor must command their ship prevented Dalrymple from getting the appointment, and when Cook returned with an accurate survey of the coast of New Zealand

and a firm belief that the continent could not lie there, Dalrymple was not convinced. Cook's second voyage took him again to the south Pacific, but his third voyage, begun in 1778, took him by way of the Sandwich Islands to the north-west coast of America, to see whether a practicable North-west Passage (to give Britain her own route to the Pacific and so to *Terra Australis*) might not yet be discovered.

The Spaniards and the Russians had been before him on the coast, and Cook was instructed to respect the subjects of any European prince or state, not to disturb them, and to treat them with civility and friendship. To what extent this meant that he was to acknowledge their claims, if they were ahead of him, was later a subject for dispute. For the Spaniards had begun a renewed drive to explore the vast lands which they claimed; they had opened up the coast of California, founded San Francisco in 1776, and sent Juan Perez to voyage northwards in 1774. Perez had picked up the north-west coast near Queen Charlotte Islands and worked north to Dixon Sound. He was then driven out to sea, and when he made land again it was at Nootka Sound. Here he enjoyed some trifling intercourse with the Indians who came out to the ship in their canoes, but before he could land and take formal possession he was again driven out to sea by the weather. Perez sailed south, missing Juan de Fuca Strait and the Columbia River, and though he was able to see the coast from time to time he made no further landing until his return to Monterey. Next year, in 1777, Perez was back on the coast again, this time as sailing master of an expedition of two ships, which between them staked a Spanish claim at the Strait of Juan de Fuca, sailed into Assumption Bay at the mouth of the Columbia but did not land there, and landed and took possession in the neighbourhood of Sitka.

This brought the Spaniards to the verge of the claims of the Russians, whose advances had been instrumental in stirring Spain to vindicate her ancient claims on the Pacific coast. While the Spaniards had arrived by sea, from the south and the west, the Russians came from the north. As early as 1728 Vitus Bering had sailed with Alexei Chirikov through Bering Strait and round East Cape, demonstrating that there was open water between America and Asia. He and Chirikov followed up their pioneer work in 1741 by a scientific expedition which started from Kamchatka, and after being driven south-eastwards made back to land on a north-easterly course. Chirikov made his landfall on the south of Baranof Island, the later site of Sitka, while Bering landed further north, near

Mount Elias. From there Bering sailed north and west, and so came to the Aleutian Islands, whither Chirikov had preceded him, and next stopped on Bering Island where he died of scurvy. His scurvy-ridden crew, their ship driven ashore, lived for a time on sea-otters and took the skins with them when, in the following year, they made a raft and ventured back to Kamchatka.

This disastrous voyage was the origin of the Russo-American fur trade. The sea-otter skins lured Russian merchants and traders from Kamchatka to the Aleutians in 1745, to Kodiak Island in 1763, and so to the mainland.

Cook therefore had both Spanish and Russian claims to watch. In fact he met no Spaniards on the coast. From the Sandwich Islands he struck land on the Oregon coast at a point which he called Cape Foulweather, coasted north to Cape Flattery missing the mouth of the Juan de Fuca Strait, was driven to sea and came in to land again at Nootka Sound (which he originally called King George's Sound). Here he landed, refitted his ships, erected an observatory and began a casual trade with the Indians from which he and his men got some valuable and attractive furs. Cook visited several villages, and he sailed right round Bligh Island; but although his visit was so much more real than that of the Spaniards under Perez four years previously, he did not take formal possession of Nootka Sound.

From Nootka Cook worked north up the coast of Alaska, and through Bering Strait until he was stopped at Icy Strait. He had been given a copy of Samuel Hearne's account of his journey to the mouth of the Coppermine and knew Hearne's delineation of that part of the shore of the Arctic Ocean. His object was to work his way through by sea from west to east, and although he did not succeed he gave a certain shape to much of the Pacific coast towards which the fur-traders and explorers were reaching out from the eastwards.

To the great point at issue, the existence of a North-west Passage, Cook's last voyage brought confusion rather than certainty. He was stopped by ice and drew off to winter in the Sandwich Islands (there to meet his death) before he had finished his probe to the east. So he could not be taken to have proved that there was not a passage. Worse, because the current there ran so fast, he had taken Cook's Inlet to be the mouth of a large and swift river. He took possession of the mouth of 'Cook's River', as he called it, for the British; and his assumption that such a river existed seemed to offer a promise of a route from the Athabaska region which started a whole chapter of exploration and discovery.

It was 'Cook's River' which Peter Pond had meant to descend to the Pacific when he planned his further explorations from Lake Athabaska, and he imbued the young Alexander Mackenzie with this notion. So when Mackenzie followed the Slave and Mackenzie Rivers to the Arctic, he was working in the hope that they might swing west and lead him to 'Cook's River', and throughout his journey he was diligently enquiring of Indians for news of this river of the west. Among those misled was Alexander Dalrymple himself. He was shown a copy of a rough map drawn by Peter Pond, in which Lake Athabaska was placed so far to the west of its true position that it appeared to Dalrymple that there should be an easy and short passage from that Lake to the coast as delineated by Cook. Dalrymple must have been as disappointed as Mackenzie himself, or any of the partners assembled at the Grand Portage in the summer of 1790, at the conclusion that the Slave and Mackenzie Rivers led to the Arctic and not to the Pacific. The error in the siting of Athabaska Lake was not remedied until Philip Turnor made an accurate observation there; and it was generally accepted that it was Dalrymple who had pressed the Company to send Turnor surveying and who arranged the employment of Captain Duncan by the Company in an attempt to find a route westwards from Churchill. Dalrymple was certainly involved in the arrangements which the Company made with the Admiralty at this time and which resulted in Duncan's abortive voyages from Churchill. It is impossible not to feel a suspicion that this naval captain roused the hostility of Robert Longmoor and the other veteran inland travellers who were expected to help him. But though Duncan had no experience of inland travel he seemed well qualified in other respects, for he had commanded the sloop *Princess Royal* on the Pacific Coast, had worked north from Nootka Sound to the Queen Charlotte Islands and had sailed through Hecate Strait. Thence he had taken the sea-otter skins and other furs, which he had traded, to Macao on the China coast.

In this Duncan was part of a trade-pattern which was to persist in the fur trade for another century. The furs traded by Cook's men, like those brought back by Bering's survivors, were for the most part sea-otter, and when Captain Clarke took Cook's expedition on to Macao after the death of its leader the men found the Chinese ready to offer enormous prices for these rich and lustrous pelts. From the reports of this traffic a fur trade from England to the Pacific coast and thence to China was rapidly stimulated, to make enormous and immediate profits. The first of such voyages came from individualists already engaged in eastern trade—from Captain James Hanna who

was at anchor in Macao when Cook's men arrived and who put back to Nootka to trade in 1785; or Captains Lowrie and Guise who were outfitted from Bombay in 1787.

Such ventures were enterprising and fabulously successful; but they were dangerous. They got into clashes with Indians, and they ran counter to the East India Company's control of the trade to China, the South Sea Company's control of the trade in the Pacific, and the Portuguese control of Macao, the only port on the Chinese coast which was officially open for trade with western ships. Prospects of a better-controlled trade came with the organisation of the 'King George's Sound Company', which procured licences from the East India Company and from the South Sea Company, and which had the support of the City of London, of scientists and of geographers, in a way which gave it great opportunities. Captain Duncan had voyaged on the north-west coast in the service of the King George's Sound Company, and when he came into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company it was with a similar idea in his mind, for if he could find a Passage through from Churchill to the Pacific he was if possible to sail on to China, and it was arranged that the East India Company's resident at Canton should receive him favourably. At the same time the East India Company was tempted to buy a trial consignment of £500 worth of the Hudson's Bay beaver in London, to see whether it would make a sale in Canton.

In all of this there was something afoot which necessarily surpassed the scope of any chartered company. The vastly greater corporations of the East India Company and the South Sea Company were as much outpaced as was the Hudson's Bay Company by the great movement to find a way to the Pacific and to explore it until the great southern continent stood revealed. This was a complete and deep re-formation of the whole concept of empire, a transition in which new geographical notions (which ultimately proved to be mistaken) went alongside of new constitutional and economic notions (which ultimately proved to be inspired and sane).

The fur trade of the Pacific coast, and that between the Pacific coast and China, were but parts of this great new synthesis, perhaps little more than adjuncts to the more important need to explore the Pacific coast. But they were parts of a whole which was beyond the compass, perhaps beyond the vision, of any private trading corporation, and which necessarily had to be undertaken by the resources of the state. Alexander Dalrymple was the protagonist, the theorist; but the Admiralty and the Government were deeply involved, and the profits and the importance of the trade on the Pacific coast soon

led to diplomatic events which in themselves showed how far the problems of a Pacific fur trade had passed beyond the scale at which the Hudson's Bay Committee could have controlled them. The trade soon spread to include beaver and other furs as well as sea-otter; it rapidly fell into methods in which the ships coasted from point to point, and shore bases and posts were not required except in the more hospitable south, as a base for operations.

Nootka Sound provided such a base. There Captain John Meares, who had suffered the privations of wintering on the coast without a base, got the concession of a small plot of land from an Indian chief in 1788, and built a small house. He drove a most lucrative trade during the winter, and took formal possession of his post at Nootka and of an outpost at Clayoquot Sound. He failed to notice or to explore the mouth of the Columbia as he journeyed further down the coast, but on his return he claimed, later, that he had sent a boat to explore and take possession of the Strait of Juan de Fuca—a doubtful claim. Back in Nootka Sound, he was joined by Captain Douglas in the *Iphigenia* and by the first American ships to trade on the coast, the *Lady Washington* and the *Columbia Rediviva*, both from Boston. Leaving the *Iphigenia* and a small ship, the *North West America*, which he had built and launched at Nootka, to carry on the trade, Meares then took his returns to Macao and there entered into a partnership with two ships from the King George's Sound Company, which gave him the benefit of that Company's licence to trade within the sphere of the East India Company.

So fortified, Meares returned to Nootka in 1789. His arrangement with the King George's Sound Company meant that he was indubitably sailing as a British subject (for hitherto he had been accused of sailing under the Portuguese flag to avoid British restrictions). The object now was to make a solid establishment at Nootka. But in the meantime the Spaniards had been informed (by a French expedition under Lapérouse whose interest in Arctic navigation had outlasted his destruction of the Company's posts) that the Russians also threatened to take possession of Nootka. Estevan José Martinez, after an exploratory voyage in 1788, was therefore sent to vindicate Spanish claims in 1789; the English were to be told that their claims were invalidated by Perez' voyage of 1774, and Americans and Russians were even more definitely rebutted. Martinez had no difficulty in carrying out these instructions against the American ships. Their captains easily acknowledged Spanish sovereignty in return for permission to depart peacefully with the furs which they had traded; they were entirely individualists

and neither they nor the United States government had any interest in asserting an untenable claim to sovereignty.

Although they presented themselves under Portuguese colours, the two English ships which Meares had left on the coast quite refused to accept Martinez and the Spanish claims. He seized the *Iphigenia* and then released her on bond to go forth on a fur trade voyage; the little *North West America* he provided with a crew under a captain drawn from the American ships. Then Meares' two ships arrived back from Macao, the *Princess Royal* and the *Argonaut*, getting to Nootka in June 1789. Diplomacy prevailed with Captain Hudson in the *Princess Royal*, and he sailed out on a fur trading voyage up the coast. But Captain Colnett in the *Argonaut* was either worse handled or more truculent. He yielded nothing to the Spanish claims. He and his ship were therefore seized and so, on his return, was Captain Hunter and the *Iphigenia*.

The first two vessels, *Iphigenia* and *North West America*, had been taken by Martinez when they were flying the Portuguese flag. But Hunter and Colnett had been taken under the British flag, and when news reached London, in 1790, the British government demanded satisfaction. Captain Meares arrived from Macao and in his *Memorial* and his *Voyages made in the years 1788 and 1789 from China to the North-West coast of America*, gave the British public a highly-coloured version of his exploits and of the extent of his post and of his trade at Nootka. Spain, self-confident in her new strength under the reformed government of King Charles III, prepared her fleet for possible war. England followed George III in a truculent assertion of her rights; possible allies were sought in Prussia and Holland, the Commons voted a million pounds for the emergency, and orders were given to man the fleet.

The Nootka Sound incident came to a peaceful end because the British were afraid to drive Spain into the arms of France, and because the Spaniards were afraid that France, now embarked upon the full tide of revolution, would take advantage of any difficulties in which Spain might land. The Spanish colonies, too, might well revolt (as they did a little later) with Britain to help them. So reason and diplomatic protocol brought a solution in which British firmness, and the isolation of Spain, were marked. The ships were released, Meares and his partners were paid an indemnity and then, under threat of war, the Nootka Sound Convention as drawn up by the British was accepted in October 1790. In their willingness to save the dignity of the Spanish crown whilst yet denying the claims to exclusive sovereignty, the British secured the restoration of posts

and land, and the right to navigate and trade, to the British subjects involved, not to the British Crown. British subjects were, indeed, forbidden to trade illicitly with the Spanish settlements or to venture near them, but the Convention nevertheless brought down the old Spanish claim to the whole Pacific coast and left the way open for the development of trade there.

The Nootka Sound Convention brought Captain George Vancouver to the Pacific coast in 1792, to take possession of the lands and buildings which the Spaniards had agreed to restore. But with the best of goodwill he and the Spanish commander Don Juan Quadra were unable to agree on what was involved, for Captain Meares had grossly exaggerated his pretensions. So in 1794 the two governments, now seeking peace with as much determination as they had formerly threatened war, agreed to abandon Nootka and save further controversy.

Spanish claims to exclusion having been repudiated, the fur trade of the Pacific coast now lay open, and French, American, and English ships took their shares, with the Americans tending to profit from the wars in Europe and their own persistence. The fur traders added something to geographical knowledge, but trade was from ship to shore, or from ship to canoe, contacts with Indians were brittle and suspicious, liable to break down into murders and massacres, so that the traders helped but spasmodically in opening up the coast. It was the British Admiralty, still seeking the Northwest Passage, which made the great and final contribution here, in the voyage of Captain Vancouver in the *Discovery*.

For Vancouver's voyage, as for Cook's, Alexander Dalrymple was in the centre of the web, industriously and persistently spinning plans for a route which would bring the furs of the prairies and of the north-west out to the Pacific coast and so to the China market. Samuel Hearne's voyage to the Coppermine, and the conclusion that there was no sea-route from Churchill to the Arctic, were common knowledge by 1790, for Hearne's journey had been publicised in the Introduction to the report on Cook's Third Voyage, and again in Pennant's *Zoology*. But Dalrymple was so set on his theories that he was prepared to deny the conclusions of Cook's masterly surveys, let alone those of Samuel Hearne, and he convinced himself that the area between the Pacific and Repulse Bay was not solid land but a maze of islands, through which a way must somewhere lie. He advocated a *Plan for promoting the Fur Trade and securing it to this Country by uniting the operations of the East India and the Hudson's Bay Companys* in 1789; and Vancouver, who had been with Cook on

his second and third voyages, was in 1791 sent out to seek a water-communication between the north-west coast and the eastern side of the continent. For this the general line of the coast must be ascertained, and large rivers, gulfs and inlets, must be explored; in particular the Strait of Juan de Fuca and 'Cook's River' needed investigation.

Vancouver took the *Discovery* from Plymouth in April 1791, with Lieutenant Broughton in the tender *Chatham* as consort. Deceived by the line of breakers at the mouth, he failed to recognise the Columbia River, though he was within a couple of miles of land at that point. He did, however, enter de Fuca Strait, he charted each inlet to its head and he took formal possession of what he called New Georgia. He had made it certain that no route to Hudson Bay or the prairies lay there. As he cruised northwards the shoals off-shore prevented him from investigating the mouth of Fraser River, though he was doing most of his coastal survey from small boats. He then ran south to meet the Spaniards and to conclude the negotiations over Nootka Sound—for Vancouver was the British envoy for that purpose. Meeting on Vancouver Island (as it came to be called) he arrived at no conclusion with the Spaniards, and while reference back to Europe was necessary he sent Lieutenant Broughton in the *Chatham* to explore the Columbia River, which was now known because the Americans under Captain Gray had traded there (not without bloodshed) in May 1792. Although the Americans had traded in the river and had been impressed by the fine chance it presented for settlement, they had sailed away after a brief and bloody visit. Broughton, therefore, after a careful survey took formal possession in the King's name at a point which he called Point Vancouver on the north shore of the estuary.

In 1793 Vancouver, who had surveyed the Spanish posts to the south and had then joined Broughton to winter in the Sandwich Islands, began exploration of the more northern inlets on the coast. Here he came close to establishing the western approaches to a continental route, for the *Chatham* worked her way up the North Bentinck Arm to Bella Coola River early in June, while Vancouver himself explored Dean Channel between King Island and the mainland, then Milbanke Sound and its adjacent waters, then the mouth of the Skeena River, Observatory Inlet, Nass Bay, Portland Canal and Prince of Wales Archipelago. He was then certain that any notion of a strait suitable for sea-going ships was a complete fallacy and that any route from east to west could only be achieved by following the rivers through the mountains which were so often visible from the sea.

Vancouver returned to the Pacific coast in 1794, and finally clinched the argument by showing that 'Cook's River' was only an inlet of the sea and could no longer be considered as a river. In the meantime, in fact while Vancouver had himself been close at hand on the coast in 1793, Alexander Mackenzie had at last accomplished his own ambition and fulfilled the dreams of Peter Pond and of Alexander Dalrymple, by completing his astounding voyage to the shores of the Pacific.

While Dalrymple was bringing pressure to bear on the Hudson's Bay Committee, Mackenzie was in England learning those technicalities of surveying of which he felt the lack. Back in Canada once more, he went to Athabaska without delay, and in October 1792 he left Fort Chipewyan to see whether the Peace River, to the south and west, might provide that route over the mountains to the coast which he had sought in vain by the Slave and Mackenzie to the north. This was a well-planned and well-supported venture, depending on the Northwesters' techniques of travel and trade. Two hardy *voyageurs* had gone ahead of Mackenzie up the Peace, and the North West Company's 'Old Establishment' above Vermilion Falls under John Finlay, its 'New Establishment' further on at Fort du Tremble, and the outpost at McLeod's Fort near Smoky River, had opened the country and helped Mackenzie on his way. His own two men had squared timber and chosen a site for a house, and Mackenzie wintered in comparative comfort at his house a few miles above the mouth of Smoky River.

Mackenzie was covering new ground when he set off in May 1793, with seven Canadians and two Indians, in a 25-foot canoe which they had made. Up Peace River to the Forks they had to track their canoe through Peace River Canyon with immense difficulty, and so reached the choice of routes where Finlay River flows in from the north, and Parsnip River from the south. Mackenzie took the southern choice by the Parsnip—fortunately, for the Finlay loses itself in the mountains—but passed by the mouth of the Pack River as he went upstream. This would have led him to McLeod Lake and so to Fraser River by a reasonable route, but from the head of Parsnip River he was guided by some Indians whom he met on the Height of Land to a small lake whence ran a small river emptying into a large river which ran westwards. In fact Mackenzie went by the James Creek (the Bad River) into Herrick Creek and so into McGregor River, which forms the north branch of Fraser River and which took him down to the Forks of the Fraser and so into the main stream.

The Fraser, however, is not an easy and peaceful stream, either in the Fraser Canyon or elsewhere on its course. The labour and fatigue of tracking and portaging went with terrifying hazards in the rapids and falls, the great canoe was patched and mended beyond hope, his own men were scared and mutinous, and the Indians through whose land he was passing were independent, well organised in large villages (probably as a result of their ability to depend on steady sustenance from salmon) and suspicious of the first white men whom they had seen. It was a magnificent triumph of skill and leadership by which Mackenzie pushed his party south and westwards. But he decided to evade the perils of the Fraser by taking an Indian route by the 'West Road River' (the Blackwater). He was working from Captain Meares' statement that Nootka Sound must penetrate inland to 126° W., and with his new ability to take a reading and to establish his own position he was confident that the way to the coast could not be far. So he built and cached a new canoe, ready for his return journey, and set out overland on 4th July, to drop into the Bella Coola River on 17th. Here he was feasted on salmon and provided with canoes in which he reached the sea at the North Branch of Bentinck Arm three days later, on 20th July. Vancouver himself was off the Queen Charlotte Islands on that day, and the little *Chatham* had visited the same village six weeks earlier, on 1st June.

Continuing on down the North Bentinck Arm to reach the open sea, and determined to stay on the coast until he could get an observation which would establish his position, Mackenzie found himself in trouble from the aftermath of clashes between the Indians and Vancouver's men—to whom the Indians referred as *Macoubah*. Surrounded by suspicion and hostility, and plagued by constant pilfering, Mackenzie took his leaky borrowed canoe into Dean Channel between King Island and the mainland, to 'the cheek of Vancouver's Cascade Canal', where he fixed his position, mixed vermilion and grease, and wrote with proud simplicity on a rock 'this brief memorial—"Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three"'.

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CHAPTER VIII

EXPLORATION AND EXPANSION BY THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

Mackenzie's brief inscription was the heroic end of a long search. The route from Canada to the Pacific, and so to the China market, lay open; and it was a fur-trader's route. The contest of the rival traders had opened a continent, and had thereby expanded the bounds of the trade itself. Even Athabaska, the *El Dorado* of the north-west fur trade, had become but a stage in further expansion. But even Athabaska still lay under the control of the Northwesters. The Hudson's Bay Company men had no posts there, and no route thither save through Cumberland House.

It is not surprising that, with so much energy and achievement on the one side and so much difficulty and obstruction on the other, David Thompson should have transferred to the North West Company, for Mackenzie's journey stood alone, the sort of work which Thompson longed for. The Hudson's Bay Company Committee had achieved nothing with this epic quality about it. Indeed, in the nature of things it was impossible that a middle-aged and prosperous committee sitting in London should equal the vision and the courage of the partner who himself ventured across the continent. The North West Company's flexibility gave a power of purposeful direction which could not be matched in a more orthodox administrative pattern; and if such a remote managerial committee should perchance fall in with plans for discovery their explorers would have to suffer the defects of remote control and the jealousies and local rivalries of 'Inland Chiefs' and 'Resident Chiefs' at the posts in Rupert's Land. So, rightly, such glamour as Hudson's Bay exploration achieved attached to the explorers themselves, to Kelsey, Henday, Hearne, Turnor and Thompson, while the Committee and the Company always appeared lethargic and apathetic.

But although David Thompson berated the Company for skimping the recruitment of qualified surveyors it had, by his time, kept going such a succession of surveyors that it knew where its posts were, and where the Northwesters' posts were, and the general outlines of the north-west territories, in a way which the Northwesters themselves could not emulate; and it had pushed its trade and its

posts forward to challenging positions everywhere save in this last new venture, Athabaska and the route to the Pacific.

The contrast between the purposeful and successful organisation which sent Alexander Mackenzie to the Arctic and then to the Pacific, and the uncertain inefficiency which lay behind David Thompson's journey to Athabaska is clear, and significant. But the significance lies in the contrast between two types of business organisation, each apt for its purpose. On the one hand stood a 'partnership' strong in personalities, which by its flexibility gave rein to enterprise and individuality to a degree which often proved dangerous and which soon produced disruption. On the other hand stood a staid and durable chartered company which achieved coherence and stability at the cost of many promising ventures, and of a conservatism which often proved frustrating. The contrast was not, as Thompson portrayed it, between a company zealous for discovery in the national interest and a company reluctant to discover, and still more reluctant to divulge, the details even of its own domain.

For Alexander Mackenzie's interest was certainly not in discovery pure and simple. There was in him an element of personal ambition which could not well be lacking in so forceful and courageous a leader. There was, too, a lasting and essential interest in the fur trade. His major ideas did not die and did not change, and he was urged across the continent by a firm belief in the plan which had been for over ten years in his mind, and which had first been in the minds of the Northwesters when they had supported Peter Pond's vague proposals to open up the north-west. They then hoped to accomplish such discoveries as would lead government to grant a monopoly which would unify the whole fur trade, and in concluding his published account of his *Voyages* Mackenzie reverted to a plea for such a monopoly.

The trade made possible by his proof that a passage to the Pacific existed, he argued, 'from its very nature cannot be carried on by individuals'. It needed men of wealth to direct, and men of enterprise to act, in a common interest so arranged (as in the North West Company) that the latter should provide a constant succession to the former; men experienced in the field should in their riper years take control of policy. His conclusion was that the North West Company should be amalgamated with the Hudson's Bay Company and carried on under the Royal Charter of 1670. If necessary the Hudson's Bay Company should be compelled by government to surrender its rights at a valuation; and the Northwesters should be

granted those rights, which should be extended to the Columbia River. In any case the Northwesters should be given the right to bring in their trade to Hudson Bay instead of to the St. Lawrence. The value of a 'well-regulated' trade, the importance of organised opposition to the Americans on the coast, were tied together, in Mackenzie's mind, with the proof of the route across the continent and the possibility of an approved monopoly getting concessions from the East India Company.

While Mackenzie was thus as much devoted to furs as to discovery, the Hudson's Bay Company Committee was also alive to both aspects of the problem. Overlooking the fact that Thompson had nothing on which to write or draw after his canoe upset on his journey from Athabaska, they demanded his maps from him, and they kept Philip Turnor in their employ for some years after he had retired from active service, so that he might complete the maps of his journeys. This, however, was almost an academic interest. In the field, expansion of the rivalry with the Northwesters into Athabaska was a move in which the Northwesters had the initiative, and the Hudson's Bay men were hampered by the jealousy of York, the predominance of the Saskatchewan, and the inefficiency of Churchill. Yet elsewhere the Company carried its trade up to, and even into, its rival's territories.

In the southern posts the policy of setting up small and temporary log-huts, similar to those of the Northwesters, gave a mobility to the Company's organisation which was a great advantage, and even the Canadians' use of pemmican to give greater speed and mobility was emulated in an order that recommended the 'Inland Chief' to lay up a store of 'Provisions prepared by the Natives, at the Southern Settlements, in Order to be taken by those Servants to more inhospitable Countries in their progress to the Northward'. Tomison's establishments of Buckingham House and Manchester House were effective parts of the general picture, and the capacity to move alongside of the Northwesters was revealed when even the bitter Edward Umfreville felt that the lesson of his rivalry with Donald MacKay, himself once a Northwester, on the Upper Saskatchewan was that he should again offer his services to the Company.

The policy, even under Tomison on the Saskatchewan, was not free of defects, or even of disasters. Tomison's jealousy of other developments led to a sharp reproof from a Committee ready to suspect that 'Obstructions are purposely thrown in the way to prevent the success of well digested Arrangements'. Thirteen canoes had been built inland in 1791, but the Committee could not be sure

that they had been usefully employed, and took Tomison to task for his 'glaring inconsistencies'. For not all of Tomison's ventures were completely successful, and even he with his capacity to direct and re-route the inland outfits was at times forced to a dangerous position. This was shown in 1794, when the small post which he had set up on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan was destroyed. Mitchell Oman had built the post in 1785, under Tomison's orders, and it proved a focal point in the trade rivalry. David Thompson had wintered there in 1786, and the small English post seemed secure in the loyalty and affection of the Indians by contrast with the suspicion and hostility from which the Northwesters suffered as a heritage from the early days of Holmes, Graves and Peter Pangman. Yet in 1792 Isaac Batt, the veteran traveller, was killed by two strange Indians who had been ill-treated by Pangman, Batt's squaw and his three sons were stripped, and the easy confidence of the English was undermined. Worse was to follow.

In 1793 the Gros Ventres (or Fall Indians) raided the North West post to get arms with which to avenge themselves on their Cree enemies. A recent massacre by the Crees had embittered the tribal quarrel and had also left the Gros Ventres convinced that their enemies, lords of beaver-country which gave them good furs to trade, were armed by the white men. At the North West post the Gros Ventres were driven off; but they descended on the Hudson's Bay men at Manchester House and stripped it clean. So armed and encouraged, they came again in 1794, a hundred strong, to surprise the little post on the South Branch, where no defences had been built and where they found only two Englishmen out in the country and two in the post. The two men in the country were caught and killed; the remaining two left the house and hid in the garden. There one of them, William Fea, was caught and killed. The other, John Cornelius Van Driel, watched the sacking and burning of the house and the murder of the Indian women and children there, and escaped by night in a canoe, eventually reaching Cumberland House by way of the North West post at Nipawi. This North West post was defended by Louis Chastelain, but he had a well-built house with bastions at each corner and a bullet-proof log-house over each gate-way; he had, too, timely warning from the flames of South Branch House, and his four Canadians and three Indians were at their stations when the attack came.

The sorry affair was an example of the confidence and slowness of the Company's posts, and of the way in which rivalry in the fur trade entailed a unified impact upon the Indians even although the

Europeans were split. In their search for arms and plunder the Gros Ventres made no distinction between Northwesters and Hudson's Bay men, and the misdeeds of the one could easily be visited upon the other. The defects of the English post were perhaps due to the need to oppose the Northwesters wherever they went, but they also reflect, by the weakness of the establishment, the competing claims of the other English ambitions. Here the rivalry between York Fort and Churchill, a rivalry as old as the first establishment of Fort Prince of Wales, had its effect.

While Tomison's efforts on the Saskatchewan and Colen's in the Muskrat country kept the returns from York steady, at Churchill the trade suffered from the Northwesters' predominance in Athabaska. Canadian traders boasted that they got their furs 'from the Door of Churchill', and there William Jefferson and his successor Thomas Stayner found no remedy but to follow the example set by Hearne and trust the Chipewyans with ever more and more debt. The remedy not only led to the rueful conclusion that Churchill's trade never covered its expenses, but it also sent the debt-laden Indians either to the Canadians or perhaps to York, to trade their catch instead of paying their debt. The Committee tried to reconcile the interests of the two posts, but the rivalry was as much a rivalry in evading the costs and responsibility for exploration as it was for the profits of trade, since the duty of opening up Athabaska detracted from the effort which could be spent on the Saskatchewan.

This also was a problem which the Committee tried to take in hand, in an effort to make Churchill probe for the route to Athabaska. After the failure of Captain Duncan and his slooping voyages the inactivity at Churchill should have been dissipated by Peter Fidler. He had come down to York with Turnor, after his winter spent among the Chipewyans on Slave Lake, with a great reputation as an enterprising traveller and a competent surveyor. He would gladly have gone back inland again, and in 1793 the Committee ordered that he and Malchom Ross should go into Athabaska via the Nelson River, Churchill River and Reindeer Lake route of which Turnor had written. In fact David Thompson was sent to Cumberland in this year, and Ross went with him.

The possible alternative route from Churchill was in the hands of George Charles, another Grey Coat apprentice who had been at school with David Thompson, and who had been sent out to the Bay in response to Dalrymple's pressure for the appointment of surveyors. But George Charles' training had been perfunctory, his heart was not in surveying and exploring, and though he spent the

rest of his life in the Company's service he became more and more of a trader and less of a surveyor. So although he went inland from Churchill in 1793, and penetrated to Wepiscow (Burntwood) Lake, his journey was little to the purpose for he had merely pushed from Churchill into the Muskrat country and was reviving in new conditions the rivalry of York and Churchill.

Peter Fidler had in the meantime been provided by the Company with a set of surveying instruments which Turnor had chosen for him, and he also had gone inland from Churchill. David Thompson appears to have nursed a jealousy of Fidler ever since the latter replaced him on Turnor's Athabaska journey, and the choice of Fidler to explore inland from Churchill while Thompson was sent once more to Cumberland in 1793 probably added to his feelings. Fidler reported that Seal River was an admirable route inland from Churchill and that flat-bottomed boats could be used on it, which would be a great advantage. But the Seal River journey merely underlined the Company's problems.

A fair quota of Hudson's Bay men were now as expert in canoes as the Canadians, and probably better on any kind of cost-analysis, for although the *voyageur* was capable of enormous endurance, and gloried in his prowess, he and his *bourgeois* (or master) travelled with amenities in the way of food, liquor, Indian companions and (for the *bourgeois*) even feather beds, which were quite beyond the scope of the Hudson's Bay men. In addition to their own men, the Committee had embarked on a policy of recruiting Canadians and had a sprinkling of them in the service. They were ill-disciplined, and they had learned habits of pilfering and plundering which made them incalculable and which made the truculent William Tomison refuse to engage them. They were brought up in a radically different tradition, too, and many of them were deeply imbued with the notion that instead of becoming servants at wages they ought to be supplied by the Company with goods on account, to trade as they wished. Many of them did in fact get hold of the Company's goods and trade with them. Yet they had great merits, and so the Committee encouraged their engagement, and several proposals were under discussion, now as later, for setting up some sort of recruiting agency at Montreal. But although by 1795 canoes could certainly be both built and manned to get the Company's goods and its surveyors inland, and the canoe remained the vehicle *par excellence* for pioneer work, the boat had great advantages once the route had been established, if it should prove possible. Boats were therefore used inland from Albany and Moose to Henley, Brunswick and Abitibi; they were used on

the broad waters of the Saskatchewan and there the prototype boat, evolved to ease the passage of sand-bars, with both ends shaped as a bow, led to the development of what was called the York Boat. Boats, if they could be used, would greatly strengthen the chances of Churchill making something of the Seal River route which Fidler had surveyed.

Even boats, however, required some sort of crew, and so in 1794, full of enthusiasm for the new route and its possibilities, Thomas Stayner as Chief at Churchill plundered the new recruits destined for York. Finding that the ship had brought out only two labourers for Churchill and between twenty and thirty for York (the Committee had been reduced in that year to offering a bounty of £2 to its agents for each man recruited) Stayner persuaded Captain Hanwell to leave him a further nine of those ascribed to York—and so the rivalry of the two posts broke out anew.

For the Committee the fear was that Churchill was 'falling down in your trading incursions too much to the South West instead of keeping to the Northward by which means you get into the track of the York Traders and consequently interfere with each other'. This was to cut down George Charles' activities in the Muskrat country. But the Seal River approach was encouraged; after his expedition of 1793 Fidler was kept quiet (and useless) at York until in 1795 the Committee wrote to say that he was being wasted there and should be sent inland again. Fidler was, however, sent not from Churchill into Athabaska but on a much more peculiarly York-factory expedition, to Carlton House on the upper reaches of the Assiniboine River, where York's expansion to the south was bringing it into rivalry with yet another of the Company's posts. There Fidler found himself competing for furs with the men who had come inland from Albany by way of Osnaburgh, Rainy River and the Assiniboine. York had remained sectional in its views, and when pressed to send Fidler inland did not push towards Athabaska but left that problem to Churchill. So Churchill undertook its own unpromising exploration.

Movement inland from Churchill received some sort of stimulus from the appointment of William Auld as 'Inland Trader' there, for the appointment itself reflected the views which were gaining weight, and Auld was a person of very considerable importance. He had had experience of the trade since 1790, when as a surgeon, graduated from Edinburgh, he had been sent to Churchill. There he had travelled about as his duties called him, and had so taken to the life that he was in charge of an abortive attempt to establish an inland post in 1794—an attempt of which Peter Fidler might well have

been given command. Whether because his general views and conduct were not approved, or because this inland expedition revealed him in an unfavourable light is not clear, but the Committee recalled him to England in 1795. It was while he was in England that a special appointment as 'Inland Trader' was made for him. This fitted in with a general revision of the Committee's policy and appointments, for at the same time James Sutherland was appointed 'Inland Trader' at York and Edward Jarvis, formerly Chief at Albany, was made Supervisor and Inspector over all of the Company's posts.

Something of a new spirit was penetrating even to Churchill. But in 1796 Stayner had to report that, although his returns had slightly increased (for Stayner and Charles had taken a substantial outfit up the river in two *bateaux*), yet lack of discipline among the men had led to another failure in settling an inland post, and he reckoned the loss at about a thousand pounds. Still it was Stayner and not Auld who set out from Churchill for Athabaska in 1797, significantly with four 'batteaux'. The post which George Charles had set up in the Muskrat country had proved a failure, and Charles also was ordered from Mossowes (Pike) Lake to Athabaska, though without any hope that he would get there that season. But guides were impossible to get, and Stayner had to confess failure.

Expansion of the Company's posts into Athabaska from Churchill, as from York on the lines advocated by Turnor and by Thompson, had received a full measure of support from the Committee. It had achieved nothing. The suggested routes were in part impracticable, in part they were lacking in provisions; and in part the failure was due to the jealousies, weaknesses and clashes of personality of the men on the spot. The successful expansion of the Company's trade into Athabaska was doomed to await the return of Peter Fidler to the problem. But that did not come until 1802, and then the effort came not from Churchill but from York, not via the the Burntwood Carrying Place and Reindeer Lake but via Cumberland and Ile-à-la-Crosse.¹ The conservatives proved right in their assessment after all.

So the Northwesters were left in possession of Athabaska. Neither York nor Churchill could produce an opposition. But to the south, at the focal point of their transport and provision system, they were faced with more effective rivalry. This was not entirely due to the Hudson's Bay Company, for the reorganisation of the North West Company in 1787 had not completely absorbed all of the rivals

¹ Cf. pp. 219-20, 277, *infra*.

trading from Canada. There remained a considerable body of traders working from American territory, who were steadily driving the Montreal men out of the trade south from Detroit and Michilimackinac. They were outside the orbit of the Montreal organisation, and they were ready to support and outfit disappointed and ambitious clerks who could find no opportunity within the revised North West Company. So in addition to ordinary rivals the North-westerners found opposition from the so-called 'South Men' who came up from Fond du Lac on Lake Superior into the area covered by the Red and the Assiniboine Rivers, to the south and west of Lake Winnipeg. In addition, when in 1794 Jay's Treaty ceded the south-western posts to America, Canadian firms who thereby lost their trade-territory (such as Forsyth, Richardson and Co.) also moved into the north-west.

Here, too, came Hudson's Bay men from two posts, from York and from Albany; and the North West Company's Red River Department and its Rainy Lake Department became the scenes of a concentrated and lasting rivalry which neither the Hudson's Bay Company nor the North-westerners could afford to lose.

First on the scene on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company came Charles Thomas Isham. He had been sent from York to Cedar Lake in 1789, thence to move south into Swan River and to get canoes made, ready for a venture into Athabaska from Cumberland. As a step towards penetration into Athabaska this proved abortive; for George Hudson, who was to have commanded the expedition, died at Cumberland and the Athabaska project wilted in that form, to be revived when Turnor went on from Cumberland in 1790. But Isham set up his post on Swan River in 1790, and finding the North-westerners in opposition he built a small outpost at Somerset Creek in 1793. More important, he carried goods on pack-horses overland from Swan River to the Elbow of the Assiniboine and there built Marlborough House.

Isham's route from York to the Assiniboine was difficult, and of course his venture drew off strength from Tomison's main pre-occupation with the Saskatchewan. He met obstruction from Tomison, who objected to his contacts with Canadian traders and servants, and to his sending Indians down to York to trade. But he was supported by the Committee, and he firmly settled the Company's posts in the Swan River and Assiniboine areas, the districts from which the North-westerners got not only considerable returns in furs but most of the pemmican which was so essential for the whole of their trade to the north-west.

Shortly behind Isham, to complicate his rivalry with the 'South men' and with the Northwesters, in 1793 came traders from Albany and the Bottom of the Bay. First James Sutherland, then the former Canadian brothers Donald and John MacKay; and they were in close opposition to Isham by 1795. So, here on the Assiniboine as in the Muskrat country, expansion inland from York brought her 'settlements' into active rivalry with her neighbours and emphasised the need for some such general supervisor as Edward Jarvis was appointed to be. Apart from local checks and supervision there was, as the Committee wrote, need for 'a good Understanding to subsist between all our Servants at our Different Factories and by no Means to interfere with the Trade of each other'.

The thrust from Albany had a character of its own which made it especially effective. Gloucester House and Brunswick House had been ordered to be made mobile posts, after the Canadian fashion, in 1790, and in that year Donald MacKay, who had just signed on for five years, began to submit plans for progressing to Red River and so to Lake Winnipeg itself. He had always been an exponent of a policy of cutting right to the heart of the Northwesters' system, and he had introduced himself to the Company when he had been in command at Nipigon with a plan for organising an expedition from Albany to set up a post at Michilimackinac! The object was to get provisions and canoes, and the underlying purpose remained the same when he shifted his objective away from Lake Superior to Rainy River and the Assiniboine.

The enthusiasm which Donald MacKay brought to his proposals was such that he was sent off from Albany to make a winter march of seven hundred and forty miles, partly in order to get canoes made on the projected route, and partly in order to ascertain the route and distance from Albany to Portage de l'Isle and so to Lake Winnipeg. This was something more than indulgence of the enthusiasm of the Canadian renegade, for Jarvis reckoned from the start that occupation of the Red River-Lake Winnipeg area would probably bring to a focus the inland expeditions from York and from Albany, and that it might simplify the process of expansion by serving as a depot for the collection of pemmican from the Assiniboine. Moreover Portage de l'Isle, on Winnipeg River, was a key point past which the North West Company's brigades of canoes for the Saskatchewan, Athabaska and beyond, had all to pass, to winter in 'the Grand North'. To support Donald MacKay's proposals, the Committee was supplied with a rough map 'full of absurdities', but which pointed out the route of the Canadians through Lake St. Ann (Nipigon) to their

posts in the 'little North' and the possible route from Osnaburgh to Portage de l'Isle. The proposal therefore, as Jarvis forwarded it, amounted to a plan to push from Albany towards Lake Superior by setting up a post at Lake St. Ann, while towards Lake Winnipeg the outposts at Cat Lake and at Red Lake which had sprung from Osnaburgh should be reconsidered and Red Lake should be abandoned unless the Northwesters came there in opposition. In the event Red Lake was maintained but Cat Lake was to be continued only if the Canadians came.

The Committee accepted this gambit in so far as they engaged both Donald MacKay and his brother John on five year contracts and placed Donald under the Master at Osnaburgh, on the ground that he had shown the way to Lac la Pluie. Donald, however, brought a touch of perversity to most of the things which he undertook (for which he was known as *Le Malin*), and in 1793 the Committee had to reconcile themselves to his neglect to sign a formal contract. The omission left them convinced of his value, and they made him a member of the Council at Albany, while the kind of plan which he had urged was carried forward by a decision to abandon Gloucester House and to build further south towards Lake Nipigon at Martin's Falls. Alongside of this move south through Nipigon towards Lake Superior went a reinforcement of the move south-west towards Lake Winnipeg. Here Osnaburgh was to be rebuilt and enlarged, so that it might be used as a depot for settlements 'that cannot come down so low as Martin's Fall'—that is to say, which lay to the west, towards Winnipeg.

This was getting into a region from which the fur returns were negligible. Even the North West Company paid little attention to the trade of its Rainy River Department, and provisions also were scanty there. The value of posts was strategic, and Bas de la Rivière, where Winnipeg River runs into the Lake, was the strategic centre. There Alexander Mackenzie marked a *Provision Store* on his map, and there the bags of pemmican which had been brought down from the Assiniboine were stored to assist the northern brigades.

To this area, while the Committee planned and approved, James Sutherland and John MacKay brought their outfits from Albany in 1793. Sutherland with ten men built at Portage de l'Isle and clearly demonstrated the advantage of the Hudson's Bay route by arriving about a fortnight before the Canadians. This enabled him to give fall-credit to the Indians and so to get reasonable returns—about 1,500 Made-beaver—in the following spring. The Committee approved, and were disappointed that the move had not been made

in 1792 when Sutherland had actually settled a few miles to the east at Eschabitchewan. John MacKay settled on Rainy River, where the Committee hoped that he would not only be able to rival the Canadians in trade but would also manage to entice a choice selection of their servants into the Company's service. There he spent the winter in friendly rivalry with the Northwester Charles Boyer, went down to Portage de l'Isle for the summer when Sutherland went off to Osnaburgh, there saw the Northwesters pass on their journeys, and returned to Rainy River in the autumn of 1794. He also built a new outpost at the mouth of that river at Lake of the Woods, and between the two posts he got a very fair share of the meagre trade of the region, so that in 1795 he gave up the Rainy River post and concentrated at Lake of the Woods, while the Portage de l'Isle post was moved closer to the actual portage.

Donald MacKay, in the meantime, had carried the Hudson's Bay posts yet further into the Northwesters' territories. While his brother moved to Rainy Lake he was appointed to set up a post on the 'Red River in the Grand North' (the Assiniboine) south even of Lake Winnipeg and into the prairie country from which both furs and pemmican might be got. Experience was to prove that this was the stroke which would cut to the heart of the Northwesters' system. Though the fish and the wild rice of the Rainy Lake Department were invaluable, and any rival who diverted Indians there from providing such food for the brigades was accepted as a menace out of all proportion to the furs which he might trade, yet it was pemmican from the Red River Department which was essential for the Northwest brigades. Without it the canoes would be forced to 'hunt their way' inland, and an extra season would be needed to reach the North Saskatchewan or any land beyond. So the North West Company took alarm with good reason when their Assiniboine territories were invaded in 1793.

The first challenge in that year came from the independent 'South Men', Peter and David Grant, who made one post on the Assiniboine just above the mouth of the Souris River, and another above the junction of the Assiniboine and the Qu'Appelle Rivers. Then, plodding upstream in their cumbrous boats, came the Hudson's Bay men Donald MacKay and John Sutherland, to build Brandon House near the mouth of the Souris and, shadowing them in their swift canoes, the Northwesters under John Macdonell, who left a clerk to build at the Souris and later, when they had gauged the opposition and had set up their main post on the Qu'Appelle River, sent down to reinforce him. The mouth of the Souris River therefore

carried three rival posts in 1793. They were all temporary and liable to move even in the course of a trading-season in an attempt to snatch some advantage, but the vital importance of the rivalry on the Assiniboine River was clear, and it was emphasised in 1794 when a similar three-cornered set of establishments was set up at the mouth of the Qu'Appelle River.

It was a rivalry conducted on terms which were becoming familiar in the fur trade, and of which the pattern had been seen in the early struggles of Longmoor and Tomison against Holmes, Booty Graves and Peter Pangman, on the Upper Saskatchewan. Roistering good humour and hospitality alternated with blustering intimidation; and with Donald MacKay bringing to its service the ideas he had learned in his time as a Canadian trader, the Hudson's Bay Company was not behindhand. MacKay threatened the North West Company's clerk's life, fired at him, fought the Indians and threw them downstairs, got himself put in irons when he went to take wine with his rivals, and challenged his opponent to a duel. It was a spirited rebuttal of the Committee's complaint that 'in various Journals we have perused, all our Servants fall infinitely short, in Activity, to the Canadians'.

This was, however, conduct of which the Committee could not fully approve. Indeed their ideas of a fur trade war must seem strange and 'kid-gloved' in a struggle in which not only courage but some lack of the finer susceptibilities were essentials. The London Committee were at this time showing a far-sighted strategic grasp of what ultimately proved to be the key dispositions, and were pursuing aims in the Muskrat country, the Saskatchewan, 'towards Athabaska', the Rainy River and the Red River departments, with purpose and with courage. But they were inhibited by an approach to business which caused each letter of instructions to the ships' captains to insist on regular religious services and which led the London Committee always to sign letters to Chiefs by the Bay as 'Your loving friends'. This was no empty hypocrisy; it was a sign of the decent, benevolent, rather hurt but far from acquiescent, frame of mind of this group of prosperous eighteenth-century London business men. It was a spirit which could easily be under-estimated by a more flamboyant opponent, especially when it found outlet by insisting to the Hudson's Bay servants that all must be well, since, despite appearances to the contrary, the Company's goods were superior (as the Indians would in time discover), and which ham-strung them in the middle of the struggle by forbidding the recruitment of Canadian servants who were under contract to their masters. To such men

Donald MacKay's conduct at Brandon House was not acceptable; nor did his fellow-traders like him; they smashed his crockery and lost his luggage. He was withdrawn to Martin's Falls (which was to take the place of Henley House as well as of Gloucester House) in 1794. Trade there declined, and the Committee were unaffected by the changing of the name of the post to Ernest House; in 1796 Donald MacKay was sent to York to serve, and the censorious Committee observed that 'it is pretty clear he was of very little service at Albany or its Settlements'.

This is a judgment on *Le Malin* MacKay which it is impossible to accept. Crazy, and perhaps dangerous, though his conduct certainly was, Donald MacKay had planned, and had put into execution, a scheme which used Albany River and boat transportation to bring the English posts right to the heart of the North West Company's system. The post at Rainy Lake was indeed abandoned in 1798 owing to the difficulty of finding servants for it—a temporary setback which the Committee thoroughly disapproved—but with posts at Portage de l'Isle and Lake of the Woods the Hudson's Bay men were set right in the path of the North West brigades in their Rainy River Department. With a provision depot at Bas de la Rivière alongside of the North West store, and with Brandon House well established on the Assiniboine, they were at the heart of the Red River Department and its provision trade. In this they were led by Donald MacKay, and it was he who had formulated the constructive purpose.

The Committee, of course, knew their problems; they were obviously giving their business close attention and were reading and digesting the Journals and memoranda which accumulated at this time. But while their original contribution to the strategy of the campaign was apt to take the form of intelligent 'amateur' suggestions, Donald MacKay went to the root of the matter. Thus the Committee kept going over their old ideas—a post at Whale River, at Rupert River, and the supersession of Frederick House by a more advanced post at Abitibi. The old urge to get isinglass also reappeared, against the background of a realisation that England paid over £100,000 a year to Russia for this commodity. The hope now, in 1795, was that the route to Lake Superior would lead the Company's men past fishing-grounds in which sturgeon abounded and, since true isinglass could only be got from the 'float of the sturgeon', the Company might rival the Russians. But Donald MacKay gave the Committee the idea and the purpose of settling on the Assiniboine (which he called Red River) and that area to the south-west,

'well provided with Beoffloes Deer' whence 'dried Meat' could be procured; and although by 1798 the Committee were hoping to get furs as well as provisions from the Assiniboine it was the provisions, and the sheer fact that the Company had posts there, to divert the Indians from hunting for the Northwesters, which mattered.

When the Company's men thus marked an epoch by setting up their post at Brandon House they underlined not only the strategic grasp of the Company but one of its underlying difficulties. For Donald MacKay's successor at Brandon House, Robert Goodwin, soon found himself in opposition to the outposts from York. Rivalry was fierce and new little posts abounded; in 1794-5 there were twenty-one in the Assiniboine, and they crept up the river to the area south of Cedar Lake, towards Swan River and Red Deer River. Here furs, rather than provisions, were in demand; and here the Hudson's Bay men from York under Charles Isham had also come to trade, building Marlborough House, Swan River House, then Somerset House, and finally in 1795 Carlton House, in close opposition to the Northwest Fort Alexandria about fifteen miles westward from the Elbow of the Assiniboine. For this Isham abandoned Marlborough House, and in the next year, 1796, a party sent up from Brandon House under John Sutherland came up the Assiniboine and built Albany House a bare mile above the deserted site. So Albany House and Carlton House, two Hudson's Bay Company's posts, the one supplied from Albany and the other from York, stood in rivalry on the Assiniboine within fifteen miles of each other.

With such a situation even the Committee were discouraged. In 1799 the Chiefs were told that 'future prospects appear very discouraging' and that 'the Proprietary must suffer exceedingly' unless there was an increase in returns and a considerable diminution in expenses. Lake Winnipeg and Red River (Brandon House) were to be reinforced and maintained, and their functions were more clearly defined than ever, for the summer occupation of the Brandon House men was to be to take down provisions to Point au Foutre (Bas de la Rivière). Rainy Lake was to be resettled, so that the Northwesters might be given competition in the purchase of canoes, many of which came from this department. So far the Committee had been content to suggest moves and to leave the decision to the mature deliberation of the Councils. But then came forceful decision on the fundamental issue: 'We observe from the Journals that the people from your Factory lately got so far up Red River as to meet those of

York where one party opposed the other in their Trading. Need we point out to you Measures more repugnant to the Interest of the Company? It has been our invariable orders, and we are almost tired with repeating them, that our several Factories should pursue different directions in their Journies Inland, and by no means interfere with the Trade of each other'.

It was a necessary rebuke on an important defect. But the Company could only act within its own limitations. It required forceful officers, and it encouraged them by giving bonus payments according to the trade returns from their posts. But such men were almost necessarily local and rather narrow in their interests, and any attempt to achieve unity and co-operation by the appointment of an overall supervisor depended for success upon the emergence of a dominating personality. No man capable of overriding the local interests of the different posts had been available since the days of James Knight, and none was to emerge again until the days of George Simpson. Edward Jarvis, promoted from Chief at Albany to be 'Supervisor and Inspector', was not the man—certainly not the man to reconcile the pretensions of his own beloved Albany and of its rival, York. He was insulted at York and came home to be retired, while George Sutherland was sternly rebuked for impugning the management of William Tomison. Both Colen and Sutherland were withdrawn from York. Tomison was fully vindicated and was given a sword of honour, he triumphantly went inland to the Saskatchewan again in 1797, and in 1798 he was made Chief—without limitation—at York. So sturdy independence of character triumphed; but it was an independence which was more limited in its vision than was the Committee. The independent spirit which had led the Company's men to the Saskatchewan had hardened into a sectional interest against which well-conceived plans for Athabaska, for the Assiniboine, for the Muskrat country or even for an overall co-ordination of policy, had to strive.

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CHAPTER IX

THE NORTH WEST COMPANY UP TO 1799

The rivalry of the North West Company and of the Hudson's Bay Company had produced an anomalous position by the end of the eighteenth century. While the Northwesters dominated the trade of the 'Grand North', of Athabaska, Mackenzie River, Peace River and the Rockies, the Hudson's Bay men from the 'Little North' had thrust a challenge deep into the heart of the North-west system by setting up in rivalry on Rainy River and on the Assiniboine. The cost of competitive trade in addition to the costs of exploration, and the need to eliminate all waste, internal rivalry and extravagance, led to close supervision and reorganisation within both companies.

For both concerns the basic factor in such a struggle was that the world fur-market remained, even in war conditions, active and prosperous. Although it then had Gregory, McLeod and Company (and their clerk Alexander Mackenzie) in rivalry, the North West Company as organised in 1784 secured returns averaging £30,000 for the three years of its existence. When the concern was enlarged by the amalgamation of 1787, the average for the six trading years from 1790 to 1795 ran at about £72,000. This was merely the share of the trade which came to the North West Company. It was a large share, and liable to increase, but it was not the whole trade. In 1795, it was estimated that the North West Company controlled $\frac{11}{14}$ of the trade, the Hudson's Bay Company $\frac{2}{14}$ and opposition traders $\frac{1}{14}$.

This overwhelming preponderance of the Northwesters was an essential feature of the very existence of that concern, for the costs of the long transport-route from Montreal were such that only magnificent returns could make the system pay. Alexander Mackenzie reckoned that the distance from Montreal to Athabaska was 2,750 miles and that there then lay another 1,540 miles to the mouth of the Mackenzie; and he was not far out in his reckoning. The length of the route even before the Northwesters' goods were fairly embarked on this arduous journey to the north-west was at least an equal handicap. For goods bought in London during the winter and spring had to be in Quebec by November before the river closed, so that they could be sorted and transported to Montreal by the following April. They would then go forward from Lachine, the embarkation point

about eight miles above Montreal, up the Ottawa River and so to Sault Ste. Marie. Here the canoe-loads would be lightened, and ships would be called into service, to get the goods across Lake Superior to the Grand Portage (of about nine miles) by which they entered Pigeon River and so were dispersed to the trade areas. The goods would arrive at Grand Portage some time early in July, to be sent on to the upper country late in July or early in August. If then they fitted into the trade-demands and left few 'remains' in hand they would be traded during the winter and spring, and the furs would be got down to Grand Portage in the following July, to Montreal in September and to England in October. There they would be sorted and lotted and if lucky they would be sold in the course of the winter and spring. At its smoothest, this system quite inevitably entailed a time-lag of two years between purchase of the trade-goods and sale of the resultant furs. Any delay in shipment, transportation or trading, would entail a further delay of a complete year, and normally the Northwesters' trade had to bear an interest-charge for something over three years during which the cost of the trade-goods was tied up.

The long route, moreover, brought the Northwesters late to their posts, for they could not leave Grand Portage before late July or early August. Nor were they anxious (being human) to curtail their all-too-brief stay there. At least two of the Montreal agents would come up to the Portage with the trade-goods, and there the winterers would meet them, fresh from the hardships of a winter in the north and of the long journey down with the returns. It was a scene crowded with clerks, guides, *voyageurs*, interpreters and storemen. The business to be done was urgent and important; but there was time for relaxation and festivity also, and departures for the north were regulated by closely-calculated time-schedules which aimed to bring the winterers back to their posts just before freeze-up. Outfits of goods and of provisions for the various posts would be allotted, sorted, and packed in the small *canots du nord* which would take them on, perhaps to Athabaska, perhaps to the Saskatchewan or Red River. This took place in an atmosphere of general bustle and bonhomie, the men eating together in a common hall, the proprietors, partners and agents, meeting and arranging the business of the concern, and checking and re-packing the furs which had been brought down.

This business marked the meeting of the two parts of the Northwesters' system—the route up from Montreal and the route down from the fur country. The great *canots du maître*, each capable of carrying about four tons of goods, which brought trade-goods up

from Montreal and took furs down, needed about five hundred men all told—'comers and goers'—*mangeurs de larde*, or 'porkeaters'. In distinction, those who took the canoes on were the 'winterers'; they expected to live hard, and their wages varied according to the hardships they were expected to endure. Guides and the skilled *boutes*, or steersmen, and the *milieus* (the ordinary canoemen) were clearly differentiated in wages, and in their classes they varied according to whether they were winterers or porkeaters. When Alexander Mackenzie wrote his *Voyages* he said there were 1,120 canoemen and 35 guides employed by the North West Company. Their wages and equipments formed a very considerable charge, but it would often happen that a *voyageur* would get none of his wages in cash at the end of his engagement because he was encouraged to spend, or rather to draw in advance, with his *bourgeois*. In so doing he would buy goods at the high prices of the interior, and he would sometimes also be deluded by the fact that those prices were stated in North West currency, in which one shilling equalled two of the Montreal shillings in which his wages were paid. So he would actually spend twice the sum which he thought he was spending and would often finish his engagement in debt and be forced to sign on again to straighten himself. Even so, Alexander Mackenzie reckoned that the wages bill made up half of the annual expenditure of the Company.

Canoes and canoemen were not the whole story. Since the North-west brigades not only brought up goods from Montreal but also collected provisions at Michilimackinac they needed to be supplemented by boats upon Lake Superior and on Lakes Erie and Huron. As the loss of the American colonies divorced the Canadian fur trade from Detroit and Albany this increased the importance of Montreal, and the use of boats on the lakes took on greater importance. In 1790 the North West Company had two ships of twelve and fifteen tons on Lake Superior, in 1793 it had the sloops *Beaver* and *Athabaska* on Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, and in that year it acquired the *Otter* of seventy-five tons on Lake Superior. In addition, as part of its care for canoes and boats, there was a great canoe-building yard at Grand Portage at which some seventy canoes a year were made, and the North West Company's transportation system was not only a formative part of its organisation but a large and expensive commitment in itself.

With such a heavy bill for wages and craft and with so long a transport route, the North West trade easily showed the advantages of co-ordination and partnership and the disadvantages of competi-

tion, especially when the end of the line lay in the hands of the Indians, who rapidly seized the chances which competition gave them, to enhance their prices and to demand more liquor and more debt. So the period is marked by a series of reorganisations, all within the same nebulous framework of partnerships and unregistered companies and all designed to minimise competition. Each such reorganisation had its own reasons, its own peculiar features; but the common theme was the need (and the dangers) of complete co-ordination of the fur trade of Montreal.

All of the re-arrangements, carrying the Joint Concern up to 1799, were based upon the Montreal-Great Lakes approach to the north-west. It was a difficult and costly route, yet the drive of the Northwesters more than overcame the difficulties, and their preponderance in the fur trade was due to new areas which they had opened up despite their long and arduous approach-march. The 'Grand North' supplied over half of the furs taken down to Canada, and within the 'Grand North' Athabaska predominated. In 1790 it was estimated that furs taken out from Quebec were worth about £200,000 a year; in 1794 the estimate had risen to about £250,000. Official figures confirm these estimates. The total value of the furs shipped from Quebec in 1788 was £258,970, but this was a bumper year and the sales of January, February and March, 1789, realised only £191,277. The average value for five years up to 1789 was £200,000, and of this the southern trade from Niagara, Detroit and Michilimackinac contributed something less than £100,000.

Within these over-all figures beaver still predominated. But the spread of the trade-rivalry across Canada contained some disquieting features, for it was not entirely a sign of ebullience; it indicated exhaustion also. The invigoration of the transport system led to emphasis on pemmican and on canoe-building by both Northwesters and the Hudson's Bay Company, and when goods and liquor could be got by these means Indians hunted less for furs. Those who kept to the hunt did so more ruthlessly, however. With inland posts to save them that trouble, they no longer spent the summer months in travel to the Bay, and so the beaver no longer got a close season while the hunters were away. The steady technical development of the hatting industry in Europe, with ability to make beaver-wool for felting by mechanised combing of either kind of skin, also abolished the value of the old distinctions between *coat* and *parchment* beaver and between summer and winter skins. All was alike beaver which came to the felter, and summer skins were as acceptable, weight for weight, as winter ones, and were as freely caught. Add to this the

increased use of steel traps and the discovery (recorded by David Thompson) that the castoreum, which the Hudson's Bay Company had for so long tried to get the Indians to trade, proved an irresistible bait for the beaver, and the possibility that whole regions might be trapped bare became a real danger, to which the Iroquois, devoted beaver hunters, added by a steady migration westwards. They were encouraged in the move by the North West Company, to whom they often owed debts, and by relentless trapping they could sterilise the district round a post in four or five years.

Clearly, the key to this expansion, improvement and co-ordination, lay in the quantity of fur which the European market would accept, and in the terms and prices at which it would buy. London was the entrepot to which all the furs of Canada had to go, for the loss of the American colonies had brought no repeal of the Navigation Laws which had played so large a part in driving them to rebellion. But England used only about five-eighths of the furs which Canada supplied. The remainder were sold in London to continental buyers and were forwarded on to Russia, France, Holland and Germany. Of the beaver, Russia took about a quarter of the total imports into England; France and Holland took about an eighth, and Germany took little or none. In other furs the proportions varied—Germany took about seven-eighths of the raccoons (unless beaver was scarce and dear, when English hatters used raccoon as a substitute) and about three-quarters of the martens. France took about three-quarters of the wolves; and apart from beaver England retained little for use except about half of the foxes, about an eighth of the cats, and about two-thirds of the deer skins. The London market, therefore, depended largely on external conditions, for the continental buyer was taking so large a proportion that he affected domestic prices. The Russian market for beaver was a genuine one; but not for all the beaver sent there. Much of the fur sent to Russia found its way to China, and the outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey in 1787 broke off that trade-route and led to the efforts to discover an alternative approach to China which played their part in the opening up of the Pacific coast.

The London fur-market was tricky and cosmopolitan, and any fur-trading concern had to rely on its London agents not only to dispose of its furs but to lay out its money in shipping and in cargoes, to secure good qualities, reasonable prices, and favourable terms of payment. Its London agency might ruin a fur-trading company, and it is not surprising that in all its reorganisations the North West Company showed a marked tendency to allow the agency great

weight in its affairs. This almost inevitable tendency was enhanced by the personalities involved, for the London business of the North West Company was increasingly concentrated under control of the firm of McTavish, Fraser and Company, which consisted of the two partners Simon McTavish and John Fraser. They sold the beaver, they bought supplies—and they also had many other business interests (chiefly in marine insurance) which had no connection with the North West Company or with the fur trade. In 1795, for example, they made a total profit of £7,700 odd, of which £5,500 came from their trade on commission, £1,500 from investments, £324 from underwriting. McTavish took two-thirds of the profits in addition to interest on his investment of £12,000 in the concern, while Fraser (the active partner) took one-third of the profits and interest on his investment of £1,761. They bought over £39,000 worth of goods in that year, on commission for McTavish, Frobisher and Company, the Montreal agents of the North West Company. The major part of the firm's revenue therefore came from its business of buying and selling on commission.

Alongside of the Hudson's Bay Company's sales there had grown up in London an independent fur-market, with regular auctions, brokers and conventions of trade. McTavish and Fraser, handling the shipments from the Northwesters, were the most important suppliers of this independent market. Normally they placed their furs on the market at what they took to be a good moment and accepted for their clients the price which ruled, taking payment largely in bills payable at future dates. The firm could on occasions market as much as £30,000 worth of furs at one sale, and normally the market seems to have been brisk and competitive. But within such a system there was always room for a deal which might work off a consignment on favourable terms, and Simon McTavish was not the man to pass such an opportunity out of loyalty to his normal customers. In 1791 John Brickwood, who both bought furs and supplied trade-goods to McTavish, Fraser & Co., complained bitterly that McTavish was shipping his furs direct to traders at cut prices and pleaded for loyalty to the system of public auctions. With so few brokers, such as himself, in the market, he pointed out that McTavish ought to aim at keeping him in business for his own sake, and he showed the danger of giving to any single buyer control over the supply of any range of furs. McTavish, however, could not resist such 'under-the-counter' deals. 'The great Mr. Schneider', a large and important buyer for the German market, was often his counterpart in these affairs, and neither party to the bargains imagined that anything but

a hard and impersonal business deal was under discussion. Thus in 1792 the London market was dull. McTavish was in England, but even he could make nothing of the beaver in London until he sold most of it to Schneider; the sale included the cargo of the *Hamburg*, a ship chartered by the North West Company but wrecked on the coast of Holland. The cargo was to be sold in London by the underwriters, but Schneider was to be the intermediary for the sale and was to be allowed his pickings. Fraser, however, hoped to make direct contact with the German furriers and so to avoid dealing with Schneider or any other middleman; but even Fraser in 1794 offered all the beaver of that year to one buyer, who gave a fair price for it on condition the deal was kept a profound secret, even from the brokers.

Such deals and machinations were a normal part of their business, but McTavish, Fraser and Company, managed their affairs and served the North West Company well. They made a profit of six to seven thousand pounds a year on a capital of about £14,000, after paying themselves interest on that capital. The work was done by Fraser with little clerical assistance; the only warehouse which they needed was the house in which Fraser lived, and McTavish was absent for long spells in Canada. This was an effective, if apparently understaffed, machine in which the assiduous work of Fraser supplemented the vision and enthusiasm of McTavish. At times the machine almost burst, for McTavish overloaded it outrageously. But it answered the need, and it helped to project back the influence of McTavish, magnified and perhaps a little distorted, into the Montreal agency of McTavish, Frobisher and Company, and so into the whole organisation of the North West Company. For the North West Company as reorganised in 1787, and again in 1790, was strongly under the influence of McTavish, Frobisher and Company.

Whereas the dominant position of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., within the North West Company as organised in 1787 was due to the fact that they controlled eleven of the twenty shares, but had no official or explicit agreement to back it, the agreement of 1790 began with the clause 'That McTavish, Frobisher and Coy, shall do all the business of the concern at Montreal and import the goods necessary for the supplies'. This confirmed the agents in their position within the Company and officially abandoned some of the fluidity which had theoretically been possible under the previous agreement. Economic integration had developed, and the North West Company as it took over the trade in 1792 (under the 1790 agreement) was firmly tied to McTavish, Frobisher and Co. To manage the business of the

concern Simon McTavish was forthwith to go to England; and the annual business at the Grand Portage was to be directed by John Gregory (who had no share in McTavish, Frobisher & Co., but who represented the interests of the old firm of Gregory, McLeod and Co.), Daniel Sutherland (who represented the independent opposition traders now brought in) and a representative of McTavish, Frobisher & Co. In the absence of McTavish in England it was agreed that Sutherland should adopt the last role also.

This was the concern which stood behind Alexander Mackenzie, pushed its opposition to the Company throughout the north-west, and won the admiration and the services of David Thompson. To some extent it created the very opposition which it had to face, for the increasing organisation and control of the agents left less scope for the individual trader to be given a profitable place within the concern. Peter and David Grant, for example, found their prospects as clerks less attractive and went into the field in opposition. It was a powerful and purposeful concern, but it was not without rivals at any stage in its operations. For this the reason was that although the North West Company had a reasonably satisfactory London agency in McTavish, Fraser and Company, it could never create a monopoly of the London business. McTavish, Fraser and Company, for example, bought largely from the supply company of Brickwood, Pattle and Company, but Brickwoods also had accounts with Grant, Campion and Co., with Todd and McGill, and with other rival firms. For the most part such rivals were primarily concerned with trade to the south rather than to the north-west, but they challenged the North West Company nonetheless for that. Towards the end of 1791, for example, John Gregory felt that the new North West partnership, though not yet in action, was already showing defects. He wrote to Simon McTavish (then in London) to warn him that there seemed to be a determined opposition rising, that John McGill was protesting that the twenty shares in the North West Company were worth £3,000 a year each, that Alexander Henry Junior and Isaac Todd as well as other merchants normally engaged in the trade south from Detroit were threatening to break into the 'Little North' by trading to Nipigon, and that 'Our Quarters' (the Grand North trade) would soon be disputed. There was room to doubt whether it might not have been wiser to extend the concern from twenty to twenty-three shares so that Todd, McGill and Co., Ogilvy, Forsyth and Co., and Alexander Henry might have been included. Richardson, Todd and Henry, were determined to get into the north-west if only McGill would act as agent for them at

Montreal—which McGill was unwilling to do since he felt he was too old for such speculative ventures and since he was also afraid it would draw off effort from the south and would mean the abandonment to America of the trade of Detroit and the Mississippi. As a well-meaning go-between he suggested to Frobisher that the concern should be enlarged to twenty-four shares so as to include the rivals; but Frobisher merely replied that 'the Sun shined for every body and they had a right to do the best for themselves'.

Joseph Frobisher, as the dominant partner at Montreal, was having his troubles within the concern as well as with outside rivals. James Hallowell, in partnership with John Gregory and Simon McTavish, agreed to undertake the banking business of the concern, but the arrangement, when news of it leaked out, put Alexander Mackenzie and Daniel Sutherland 'in the dumps', and Frobisher found it necessary to speak to Hallowell 'in such a style as I never did before' for his impudence in making direct arrangements with Gregory. He was ready to treat the partners with every civility if they would but acknowledge him as their principal, but he felt the weight of his twenty-four years' experience in the fur trade.

The personal difficulties accentuated major problems and underlined the importance of the agencies in Montreal and in London. The interests of the agents, closely allied as they were, were still not quite the same as those of the North West concern as a whole. On the one hand they knew that if Todd and McGill, and Richardson and Forsyth, remained outside the North West Company they would still want the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., working through 'our House in London' (i.e. McTavish, Fraser and Co.) to do their business for them. On the other hand they reckoned that if the concern were enlarged to admit the rivals, they themselves would make a smaller sacrifice than those who did not belong to the 'House' since they would profit from the greater volume of business which would pass through their hands as agents. Simon McTavish was back from London during the spring of 1792, and what with his great confidence, the fact that neither Gregory nor Frobisher saw signs of a serious challenge from the opposition, and that John Fraser in London was scared of enlarging the commitments of the House, nothing came of the proposal, and the rivalry continued.

Had the London business been going better in 1792, or had the threat in Canada seemed more acute, the result might have been different. But in London the high price of beaver-wool was driving the hatters to substitute any rubbish which they could find, the brokers had 'burned their fingers' in speculative buying, and Fraser

was short of £10,000 to meet his accounts and expected to be short by £15,000. He was as timorous and conservative as McTavish was bold and expansive. 'I believe I must exclude you from any further interference in matters of finance', he wrote, 'for from your apprehensions of our money lying unemploy'd you have derang'd my affairs very much'. He was finding his business of marine insurance difficult and risky, and it was another six months before he reached the conclusion that it might be worth while to cut off opposition by a sacrifice of some of the profit and the inclusion of the rival concerns. The difficulties of the London agency had played a large part in preventing the North West Company from being expanded into a comprehensive concern in 1792, and by the time Fraser had changed his mind a quite different arrangement had been made between the rival concerns.

Agreement was thrashed out in Montreal and the terms were sent up to Grand Portage in September 1792, for the attorneys of the different concerns to sign. Daniel Sutherland was appointed attorney for the firms of Todd, McGill and Co., Forsyth, Richardson and Company, Alexander Henry and Company, and Grant, Campion and Company. The essential agreement was that the different concerns would not interfere with each other's Indians in the upper country or endeavour to buy their furs. With so much of mutual respect and goodwill, William Grant even hoped that Grant, Campion and Company might join in common supply-buying with McTavish, Frobisher and Company, might share the freight of a fur-ship to England with them, or might even join with them to buy a ship. Neither this proposal, nor a similar move for securing that the outfitting of J. B. Cotté for trade towards Nipigon should be arranged with Todd, McGill and Company, came to anything. But the formal arrangements of the North West Company had acquired an outer ring of friendly agreements which did not quite amount to full partnership.

This agreement of 1792 was but a half-way house. It appears to have had for its chief result an increase in the trade and in the power of the agents, McTavish, Frobisher and Co. They took over much of the business of supplying the 'new partners' (so-called). Neither Phyn, Ellice and Inglis, nor Brickwood, Pattle and Co., who had formerly supplied much of the trade, lost all their customers or went out of business. But they lost substantially, and though there was a danger that they might make a recovery by a partnership with the big fur buyer for the continent, Schneider, Simon McTavish kept Schneider out of any such combination by a secret agreement to sell

him furs 'off the market'. The agents were playing for position, and they were in danger when news of their deal with Schneider reached Daniel Sutherland and the traders whom he represented. They were temporarily weakened, too, because the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., was coming towards the end of the five years' deed of partnership which it had made in 1787. Yet the agencies emerged stronger than ever. As the new North West Company of the 1790 agreement took over the trade in 1792 it confirmed McTavish, Frobisher and Company in their position as agents and factors while at the same time that Company strengthened its own internal organisation by winding up its old 'concern' and embarking on a new agreement, and added to its strength by taking over much of the business for the firms who were outside the North West Company but had made an amicable non-opposition agreement with it.

This was too subtle and carefully-balanced an arrangement to last. One uneasy element lay in the fact that Gregory had still not fully paid the debts with which he had come into the North West Company in 1787, and his former partner McLeod was claiming immunity from all responsibility. But a greater weakness lay in the fact that some of the more enterprising and dangerous rivals in the field, robbed by the amicable agreement of 1792 of the support of their former agents, turned to new sources of supply. In particular, Peter and David Grant, deprived of the support of Grant, Campion and Co., turned to William Robertson and partners; Daniel Sutherland was supposed to be involved, and the Robertsons let it be known that they had Schneider and his fur-buying interests behind them to provide capital. The result was a deep-rooted and well-integrated opposition which carried Peter Grant up to complicate the trade on the Assiniboine in 1793 as Charles Isham moved in from York and James Sutherland moved up from Albany, and which took David Grant to Nipawi and the Upper Saskatchewan, in opposition to Duncan McGillivray.

Such developments almost inevitably produced unrest among the Indians, for the rivals from Montreal were not always over-scrupulous in their trade; at their best and fairest they relied upon large quantities of spirits, at their worst they debauched, bullied and robbed. The personal character of the trader counted much, and neither the Free Traders nor the North West Company could pick and choose. So the Hudson's Bay posts met fiercer rivalry because the opposition was at feud with itself and forced to take what advantages it could, and the Company's South Branch House was destroyed because of a quarrel which had stemmed from Peter Pang-

man's use of rum and had been embittered by a traffic in arms which had first led to an incident at the Northwesters' post; so, too, the rivalry on the Saskatchewan led even to shootings and rumours of shootings among the whites. Such rivalry was bound to lead to high costs. In 1793 the Northwesters' muster-master John Gregory could engage only about two hundred men at Montreal; men to winter could be got, it was 'comers and goers' to work the canoes from Montreal to Grand Portage who were scarce. For 1794, nevertheless, the outfit was increased, and three hundred and thirty men were required. Despite this generous outfitting, the concern did not control the trade as the partners hoped, though it appeared that the Northwesters should easily carry the field. From English River Roderick Mackenzie wrote to congratulate Angus Shaw on the way in which he terrified his neighbours, 'a low born ill-bred Selfish Servile band', and to urge that the best policy was to frighten them out of their wits and to debauch and corrupt their servants. At the same time William McGillivray in the Muskrat country was carrying out exactly this policy, and was strongly rebutting the complaints which it produced from William Tomison.

But the North West expenditure was not always as wise as it was lavish; their canoes left Grand Portage late in 1793, and they were short of provisions en route. So the Grants came out with many packs of furs and the only comfort which the North West partners could find was the hope that many of them were summer skins. In 1794 also their farthest posts suffered from the length and the difficulties of their route, and William MacKay complained from English River that he had only twenty-nine 'pieces' of trade-goods while York Factory had sent in a hundred and thirty-seven to his rivals. He had only ten men in opposition to twenty-two, and it would have heartened the Hudson's Bay men to know that he was complaining that 'No man ever had so much hardship in so short a time'.

So, although the Northwesters were worrying the Hudson's Bay men, they had their own troubles too, and these came to a head as Jay's Treaty settled the boundary with the United States in 1794; for whereas the Treaty of Versailles had temporised and had made it possible for British fur-traders to continue their occupation of the western posts and to continue their trade to the south with fair confidence, Jay's Treaty foreshadowed an end to such arrangements. British and Canadian traders were not entirely abandoned by Jay's Treaty, but henceforth they would be subjected to a discrimination which came to be described as 'A Systematic Plan to drive the

British Indian Traders from the American Territory by every species of vexation'.

In this the treaty was erecting a political barrier across a natural and well-established trade-route, and in so doing it forced upon the traders a choice between diverting their pattern of trade or accepting the political implications of continuing along old lines—between turning their trade northwards instead of southwards, or trading as American citizens. The issue was important, for the trade from Montreal and the Grand Portage to the south was very considerable, almost equal in value to that brought from the north. Quebec and Montreal had long been ports through which much of the supplies for the fur trade of the south had been shipped, and their use in preference to Albany and New York increased as a means of evading the American boycott on British goods in the years before the American War broke out. When the Quebec Act of 1774 extended the jurisdiction of Quebec Province to the region of the Great Lakes it confirmed the advantages of Montreal as an approach to the rendezvous at Grand Portage, and so to the lower Ohio and the upper Mississippi. But the real advantages were physical rather than political, the comparatively easy transport route by water through Lake Michigan and by way of Michilimackinac; and they were sound enough to preserve the British traders in their position during the eleven years' interval between the Treaty of Versailles and Jay's Treaty.

At a first glance the terms of the two treaties were not so different as to underline the contrast between the fur-traders' positions, for the Treaty of Versailles had apparently conceded everything that mattered, and Jay's Treaty contained strong saving clauses. At Versailles Shelburne had conceded a frontier from Pigeon River on Lake Superior to the north-west angle of Lake of the Woods and then along the forty-ninth parallel to the Mississippi. This roused furious comment, for it gave to the Americans a vast area between the Ohio and the Mississippi which they had not attempted to settle but which was in fact covered by the network of fur-traders working south from Montreal and which was garrisoned by British troops scattered in the 'western posts', Detroit and Michilimackinac, Oswego, Niagara and Fort Erie. This abandonment of the south-west, as the fur-traders called it, was mitigated by the unreadiness of the United States to take up the issue in the first years of independence, and by the vagueness of some of the terms of the treaty, which was finally signed in a great hurry. The date at which British garrisons should be withdrawn, and the Western Posts handed over

to America, was left open; and British subjects were left free to navigate the waterways and to use the carrying-places and portages along the boundary and adjacent to it. So, although the Treaty of Versailles had sacrificed the actual territory, the British garrisons were maintained in the Western Posts by Governor Haldimand. American traders, and even American generals with orders from Washington and resolutions from Congress behind them, were barred from the posts and from the Indians who lay beyond them, and the trade to the south-west continued to be supplied by Montreal firms (such as McGill, Todd and Co., or Forsyth, Richardson & Co.) who bought their goods in England and who outfitted their winterers at the Grand Portage—still in British hands despite the treaty. Uncertain though the position appeared to be, licences to take goods up from Montreal exceeded £184,000 in 1782, and £226,000 in 1783. The trade from Detroit, in the meantime, steadily declined; but from Michilimackinac the Canadian traders drove a flourishing commerce into the Illinois country and even beyond the Mississippi into Louisiana.

Organised, prosperous and important, the Montreal merchants took full advantage of the period after the Treaty of Versailles during which the Western Posts remained in British hands and the British government was seeking to maintain the Montreal trade. As long as there remained a chance that trade to the south might be kept open for them, the merchants so engaged preferred to maintain their established connections. For example, John Inglis and Isaac Todd pressed for the retention of the Western Posts as late as 1790; and in 1791 Todd, Richardson, Robertson and McTavish were all in London lobbying for security in the trade within the American frontier. When it appeared possible that the United States might fail in its attempt to assert authority over the Indians of the Great Lakes region they asked for a modification of the frontier of 1783; and they pressed for the establishment of an independent Indian territory which should be open both to American and to Canadian traders.

It was as a part of such representations that Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe was approached in 1791 by the three great firms of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., Forsyth, Richardson & Co., and Todd, McGill and Co. Between them these three firms controlled two-thirds of the trade of Montreal, and they told Simcoe, with reason, that they were the three principal firms of that city. But two of them were less concerned with the northern trade from Grand Portage than with the southern trade from Michilimackinac at that

date. Forsyth, Richardson and Company for example, with their origins in Schenectady, had as recently as 1790 taken over from Robert Ellice the Montreal connections of the American firm of Phyn, Ellice and Company (which had transferred itself to London in 1774) and so had reinforced their southern leanings. With a London connection in the house of Phyn, Ellice and Inglis (of whose partners, John Inglis, Alexander Ellice and James Forsyth, the last two were connected by blood and marriage both with each other and with John Forsyth and John Richardson, partners in the Montreal firm) they were a formidable combination. Equally powerful, deeply-rooted in the fur trade and protected by ties of blood and interest, were Messrs. Todd and McGill. The southern fur trade was based upon long habits, loyalties and knowledge; the great companies involved would not willingly turn their major efforts to the north-west, embarking on new ventures which must result in a challenge to the North West Company.

The southern traders, however, could not quite secure their trade. Much was conceded—enough to satisfy some of them—but the United States steadfastly refused to cede any territory, and it was against this background that Jay's Treaty to settle the boundary was negotiated. It was agreed that the Western Posts should be evacuated in 1796, but that both British and American subjects might trade on either side of the frontier and might travel on the lakes and rivers on either side of the boundary and also on the Mississippi. The interests of Canadian merchants were thus safeguarded and their trade remained open to them still. But it was not entirely secured, and though Todd and McGill remained primarily interested in trade to the south, Forsyth, Richardson & Company, and other firms, transferred their interests to the north-west and increased the opposition which the North West Company had to face. This was ominous for the Northwesters, for the firms which remained faithful to the southern trade were still rivals in the markets of London and of Montreal; and there were also dangerous competitors afoot in the north-west. William Grant (known as William Grant of Three Rivers) and Etienne Campion, the partners of Grant, Campion and Co., were both experienced traders from Michilimackinac. In 1791 their firm had been particularly important, and very much in the mind of Joseph Frobisher because it was outfitting and serving as agent for the active opposition which was reaching into the Rainy River and Assiniboine areas and was also penetrating to the Saskatchewan. Associated with them, though apparently never a full partner in their concern, was Richard Dobie who had been 'the principal

merchant and inhabitant of Montreal' about 1785, and the firm was clearly capable of serious rivalry with the North West Company at all stages of the trade, from the getting of recruits in Montreal up to the selling of furs in London. Grant, Campion and Co. was one of the firms which had joined in the non-opposition agreements with the North West Company in 1792, but that did not mean that they had gone out of business or had given up anything except forthright competition at the fur trade posts. They continued to act as direct agents, suppliers and outfitters, to wintering traders, and they also adopted the role of wholesale suppliers to smaller merchants at Michilimackinac. As Jay's Treaty brought new opposition into the north-west, Grant, Campion and Co. appeared formidable; but they were reaching their end by then, for some of their traders failed, William Grant was losing his sight, Campion died in 1795, and the firm was then dissolved. In this they were typical of the fluidity of the business arrangements of the trade, and it was by a contrasting persistence and continuity that McTavish, Frobisher and Company steadily acquired predominance and gave to the North West Company its enormous volume of trade and its control over all of the effective personnel trading from Canada.

That result, however, had by no means been accomplished in 1795. At that date the North West agreement of 1790 still ruled. This agreement came into effect in 1792 and was due to run until 1799. It did not differ materially from the previous agreement of 1787 except in one particular. That was the formal concentration of the agency business in the hands of McTavish, Frobisher and Company. This entailed a corresponding dependence upon McTavish, Fraser and Company, as the London agents, and it led almost inevitably to some disgruntlement among the winterers. In 1794-5 the features of the North West Company which caused serious misgivings were, therefore, that Jay's Treaty had to a large extent cut off the southern trade and brought Forsyth, Richardson and Co., and other firms, into more purposeful rivalry in the north, that the winterers were at odds with the agents, and the agents themselves were overloaded with responsibilities.

At the London agency, Fraser was aghast at the expansiveness of McTavish, and at his growing pre-occupation with larger affairs than those of McTavish, Fraser and Co. The underwriting business had turned out badly in 1794; so had the beaver sales. Fraser was most worried at the bills coming in for settlement, and appalled at the way in which the Montreal agents, McTavish, Frobisher and Co., kept drawing on him. He thought them 'incapable of judging

what is right and too ignorant and obstinate to be advised'. McTavish sympathised, protested against the practices of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., and told Fraser flatteringly that all depended on his financial skill. The difficulty was that Simon McTavish was not only the senior partner of McTavish, Fraser and Company in London; he was also a partner in the Montreal firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Co.; and he was the dominant partner in the North West Company also. So when Fraser was forced to tell McTavish, Frobisher and Co. that 'Nothing but a total ignorance of the situation of your affairs in this Country' could explain their conduct, he was girding at his senior partner. Though McTavish managed for the time being to reconcile the different concerns in which he was interested, the need for reorganisation and enlargement almost led to a breach with Fraser and the collapse of the London agency.

The troubles of the London agency were in part due to the demands of the North West Company's winterers, in part to the extra business brought in by the non-opposition agreements with other firms such as Grant, Campion and Co. While Fraser was finding difficulty in meeting the demands of the new business, especially the demands of Grant, Campion and Co. for supplies on credit, the winterers were demanding a larger share of profits and far more attention to the purchase and shipment of their outfits. In the north an active rivalry continued despite the fact that the firms which had entered into the agreements of 1792 used the North West Company's agencies; and there seemed little chance of ending this rivalry since in Canada William Grant was sick, confined to a dark room and leaving control to others who could not end the rivalry and whom Joseph Frobisher did not trust. In such a situation the terms secured in Jay's Treaty offered to these agents the chance to cut back on the winterers and on the increasingly costly outfits for the north-west and to concentrate their business in the secure and less costly southern trade.

The decision was made in a year in which trade at Michilimackinac was poor and prospects for the south depressing. In any case it is doubtful if the agents would have been able to succeed in their attempts to restrain the expansive tendencies of the winterers, for the quality and the plenty of northern pelts still led the traders forward to the north, as they had led the *coureur de bois* despite French administrators; and the winterers had a leader in Alexander Mackenzie and a growing belief that the future of their trade was bound up with an expansion to the north-west which would ultimately take their normal routes across the continent and link them with the

Pacific trade in such a way as would merit the support of the British government.

The precise solution to the troubles of 1795 has not been recorded, but the result was that the North West Company turned from the southern trade which was so attractive to the agents, left on one side the opportunities offered by Jay's Treaty, and turned with full purpose to the north-west trade in a way which brought the closely organised fur trade of Canada into a struggle for existence with the Hudson's Bay Company. In so far as Simon McTavish retained control, and the agents remained predominant, and in that McTavish was able to bring his nephew William McGillivray into a commanding position within the reorganised concern, the solution was a clear triumph for him. But in other respects the changes marked a victory for the winterers and for the trade to the north-west. Simon McTavish was in London during the negotiations, so Joseph Frobisher acted in the early stages on behalf of the established agents, with Alexander Mackenzie urging the interests of the young partners, who asked for McTavish to come up and meet them at the Grand Portage. The 'New Northwest Partners' (Forsyth Richardson, Todd McGill and Co., Grant, Champion and Co. and the two Alexander Henrys) sent Daniel Sutherland to the Grand Portage to represent them, and the result was a new agreement in which the trade was divided into forty-six shares instead of twenty, and in which Montour, Robert Grant, Patrick Small, Peter Pangman and Alexander Mackenzie all made 'sacrifices' which enabled shares to be given to Roderick Mackenzie, Cuthbert Grant, Angus Shaw, Simon Fraser, Alexander McLeod, John Finlay, William Thorburn and Venant St. Germain. With the exception of the last, these were all winterers who traded in Athabaska and on the Upper Saskatchewan, and it was fitting (and prophetic) that Alexander Mackenzie should represent their case and should demand that McTavish and Frobisher should also sacrifice some of their interests in order that the winterers should gain in weight.

Although the actual terms of the 1795 agreement, therefore, may not be clear, it is certain that the rearrangement rose from discontent among the winterers, and that Alexander Mackenzie led that discontent. When he had come to London in 1792 he had already been full of his misunderstandings with the partners, and in his draft for the rearrangement of 1795 he proposed to reserve seven shares to provide for 'young men in the country'. This reinforced the grant of shares to existing winterers in limiting the powers of the Montreal agents; and the actual 1795 agreement went further in the same

direction. For whereas the 1792 arrangement had merely taken the business of Todd, McGill & Co., of Forsyth, Richardson & Co., and of Grant, Campion and Co., and had put it through the hands of McTavish, Frobisher & Co. in return for a non-opposition arrangement, the agreement of 1795 offered them full partnership. There was something slightly underhand about this, for while the firm of Grant, Campion & Co., was wound up (owing to William Grant's defective eyesight) the purchase of their business was kept a secret. Since they were still much concerned with trade to the south, even with designs for the Missouri and the fur trade of Louisiana, and since their demands upon the English supply agency of McTavish, Fraser & Co., were a great liability rather than an asset, amounting to about £47,000 by 1795, they matter little in themselves. But they are evidence that there were grounds for suspicion of the 'fine Italian hand' of Simon McTavish, for highly complicated schemes were in hand, to tie in the interests of the 'new partners' with the general arrangements of the North West Company and with the particular interests of the Montreal and London agencies of that company. Forsyth was bartering the Nipigon trade which his firm had hitherto outfitted, and Alexander Henry was preparing to throw into the common concern his interest in the trade to Michipicoten.

In the end terms satisfactory to all the 'new partners' could not be arranged and the agreement of 1795 foreshadowed renewed and bitter rivalry in the north-west in 1799, when the old partnership would end and the new terms would come into operation. The basic reason for this was that, although a solution appeared to have been reached, the winterers and Alexander Mackenzie were not entirely satisfied; and the failure to include all the agency houses had left out of the arrangement business men who would willingly finance an opposition in the north-west. Of the firms who had formerly managed the southern trade, Todd, McGill and Co., remained outside the new arrangement because they decided that they were still primarily interested in the south-west; but the formidable combination of Forsyth, Richardson and Company, had turned from the southern trade to the north-west and had then found that the terms offered for inclusion in the North West Company were not satisfactory. They, and other houses such as John Mure of Quebec, Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy and Company, Phyn, Inglis and Company, and Leith, Jamieson and Company, were at hand to finance and to organise 'Free Traders' and ultimately to weld them into a determined opposition.

But though the 1795 arrangement had these flaws it marked a

great personal triumph for Simon McTavish. He had returned to Canada in the early summer of 1795, leaving John Fraser in London in sore straits for lack of funds or credit in the great purchases which he was expected to make in order to carry the new business. McTavish went up to Grand Portage, and there he achieved an amicable solution; and he left his nephew William McGillivray to represent the partners at the Grand Portage and to act as superintendant of business at that place. This was an arrangement which showed that, in effect, McTavish had overcome the internal opposition despite the enlargement of the number of shares and the inclusion of more wintering partners, for William McGillivray was very much his uncle's man. He had been educated at the expense of his 'Dear Uncle' and had been in the North West Company since 1784. He had served in the Red River Department, and he had done something towards bringing about the partnership of 1787 which brought Gregory, McLeod and Company (and Alexander Mackenzie) into the concern. He had bought Peter Pond's share in the North West Company when Pond retired in 1787, and he then served in the Muskrat area and later in the English River Department with Ile-à-la-Crosse as his central post. He showed great capacity for organising the Department, and for co-ordinating food and transport services there, and he had become a partner in the North West Company (in 1790) by the time he retired from English River in 1793, and in that year he became a partner of the agents, McTavish, Frobisher and Company. But although he had so much experience in the field, his interests were not with the winterers but with the agents. This was a character and career in strong contrast with those of Alexander Mackenzie, who had also just been made a partner, who was determined no longer to stay inland, and who never could get along with William McGillivray. The latter's steady promotion therefore added to the discontent among the wintering partners, and the murmurings of Alexander Mackenzie and his followers seem to have been directed as much against the nephew William McGillivray as against the uncle Simon McTavish.

In truth the agents were in danger of overreaching themselves, and by 1795 their machinations were quite beyond the comprehension of the wintering partners. The three houses of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., Gregory, McLeod and Co., and Grant, Campion and Co., had agreed together for the purchase of a boat on Lake Superior in 1793, plans were under discussion for building a canal to avoid the rapids at Sault Ste. Marie and for building roads and warehouses which were definite long-term capital investments; and

the purchase of half of Robert Grant's interest in the newly-reorganised concern required the expenditure of almost £18,000.

Adjustment, however, could only be carried out on an interim basis, for there remained one item which could not as yet be assessed—the 'China Venture'. It had long been accepted that about a quarter of the furs which came into the English market would be sent on to Russia, and that much of the Russian cargoes then went on to China. As the French Revolutionary Wars made the markets and routes of Europe unreliable, direct shipment to China was attempted. This, in some ways, was in line with attempts to organise the fur trade of the Pacific Coast to Canton, and with increasing pre-occupation with Pacific trade. In 1792 Lord Macartney was asked to press for admission of furs into China, and in that year John Fraser reported favourably from London on the prospects of the China market, where shipmasters said that fine large skins were always saleable but where the small adventurers from the Pacific coast mismanaged their trade outrageously; they put all their furs on the market at once for quick sale, and within a few days of their ships' sailing the furs were re-sold at about twenty per cent. profit. Fraser's interest was real and active, for in that year McTavish, Frobisher and Company's account, carried an 'Adventure to China' item of £24,689 (currency).

For this trade the furs had to be smuggled from Canada into the United States, and Alexander Henry worked in with McTavish, Frobisher and Company, in Montreal, with McTavish, Fraser and Company in London, with John Jacob Astor in New York and with Messrs. Reid and Hamilton or Reid and Lennox at Canton, to procure and load ships, to effect sales and to buy return cargoes. The ventures met rivalry from direct purchase by Chinese in the London market; in 1793, for example, a 'Mr Shyhingua' (reputed to be a millionaire in sterling) bought furs worth £33,000 in London. Moreover profits on the sales of furs could be lost on the purchase of return cargoes of silks, nankeens, cups and saucers, and teas. It was sometimes impossible to sell the furs except for tea, silver dollars had always to be part of the export cargo, and the China trade, in fact, hinged more upon the purchase and disposal of the return cargo than upon the disposal of furs. Shipment of local cargoes between Bombay and Canton, an almost inevitable feature of this trade since Europeans had first tried to find some cargo which would meet a ready market in China, took further time and capital and required more detailed knowledge. So the partners found themselves involved in a pattern of merchandising which was too much for them, which

was altogether beyond the comprehension of the winterers, and in which the fur trade was a minor consideration.

The 'Adventure to China' by McTavish, Frobisher and Company, carried an adverse balance of over £13,000 in 1792, of over £16,000 in 1793, and of almost £23,000 in 1794. By that time John Fraser in London was in a panic, anxious to end the venture on any terms. There were over 67,000 skins on hand at Canton, none could be sold, and an immense quantity of better skins had just been brought in by Schneider. Reid, the Canton agent, was so uneasy that he demanded security before he would ship out a return cargo although he had £67,000 worth of furs in his hands, and Fraser found this the 'Worst account I have ever yet seen of any concern'. James Hallowell, the partner who specialised in accounts, concurred and anticipated a loss of fifty per cent. on the first venture and of twenty per cent. on the second.

This was deep water, all the more difficult since it appeared to flow logically from the Pacific coast trade to China and to bring the various partnerships into closer contact. It revealed the differences in interest between the agents and the winterers, and made it probable that the reconciliation effected by McTavish would be only temporary. Even so, that reconciliation suffered from the grave weakness that it again overloaded the London agency, and the China venture played a great part in driving Fraser almost into hysteria. He was complaining bitterly of the way in which McTavish neglected and exploited him; deprived of every comfort in life, frequently brought to the verge of despair, he claimed that he had almost blinded himself and had certainly shortened his life in order to raise money for concerns of McTavish which really had nothing to do with McTavish, Fraser & Co. But although he protested that his letters were little read but much misunderstood, and that he had in the past raised over a million pounds for McTavish's correspondents and had just recently been over £40,000 'in advance' on their behalf—all of which commitment he firmly passed to McTavish's account—Fraser nevertheless remained firm. The reason why he remained firm was, of course, that Simon McTavish, the 'Marquis' of the North West Company, had a way with him! He also had very considerable incentives to offer, for more and more of the fur trade of Canada, and of the purchase of supplies for that trade, was passing through his hands.

The London agency held firm, and Alexander Mackenzie was unable to enter into any opposition until his agreement with the North West Company had expired along with the whole agreement

on which that Company was based, in 1799. But the arrangements of 1795 had not included all possible rivals, and had not rendered them all equally innocuous. The 'Free Traders' who continued to challenge the trade of the north-west could still find support and a reputable agency. It was a brittle and uneasy peace which McTavish had achieved, and the opposition of the Hudson's Bay Company also was not to be ignored. With Tomison installed at Buckingham House the Northwesters' posts on the Saskatchewan and Sturgeon River (of Alberta) found themselves closely opposed, and Duncan McGillivray at Fort George on the North Branch of the Saskatchewan found the Hudson's Bay opposition strong enough to make him wonder whether the North West Company 'would not be averse to some kind of union from a conviction of its general utility to both parties'. Though he made good returns both in furs and in pemmican, rivalry was not only breeding trouble among the Indians but was also exterminating the beaver, and in 1795 Angus Shaw moved upstream to build at Fort Augustus, and to provoke Tomison to build Edmonton House in reply.

This was the pattern of the trade for the existence of the North West Company from 1795 to 1799. Unrest and rum rivalry on the Saskatchewan and in Red River, with both York and Churchill trying to sponsor an approach to Athabaska, were the background for expansion into the north and north-west. It was a curious rivalry, in which the English provided an effective opposition within the limitations of an entirely different set of concepts from those stamped upon the Canadian trade. While Stayner from Churchill pushed George Charles, and then William Auld, up Seal River in an effort to get to Reindeer Lake and Athabaska, Joseph Colen at York endlessly protested his desire to be rid of the whole of that venture and instructed his inland traders to do all in their power to help the Churchill men; and both were subject to constant exhortation from the Committee to refrain from competition with each other and to treat the Indians fairly. The Northwesters found them troublesome, especially in English River; and the difference in their approach may be gauged from the way in which Thomas Linklater and John McGillivray reacted when the latter claimed that a Canadian servant who had deserted to the Company was still in debt. McGillivray repaid himself by taking three bundles of furs from the Hudson's Bay bateaux as they came down in the spring from Granville House. Linklater was by no means disgraced for his acquiescence, while the Committee merely sent for a detailed narrative of the occurrence to lay before government, but despairing

of any redress advised their traders to maintain cordial relations with their rivals.

That Northwesters and Hudson's Bay men should live side-by-side did not seem so wildly impossible in 1799 as might now appear. Both were members of established concerns anxious not to allow competition to debauch the Indians, ruin the trade and flood the market. Both were afraid that such results must be the result of the rising opposition of the 'Free-traders'. So in 1799 Moose (whose trade had fallen to a point at which the Committee intervened to say that protests of loyalty and activity were valueless as an offset to bad returns) reported an agreement with the Canadians of Abitibi that neither party should send after Indians to induce them to come and trade. This was a policy which met with the Committee's approval; the arrangement was reported to all the posts and recommended as an example. But it was pointed out that Thomas Thomas had nevertheless built a new post at Abitibi, and all officers were warned not to allow such agreements to lull their suspicions of the Canadians 'who may take great advantage of this Confidence in them to our Prejudice'.

There was, in fact, but little 'confidence' between the two rival organisations; merely a feeling that they might relax a little in their hostility in order to run out of business the 'free' opposition which seemed to threaten their establishments as the rival firms began to coalesce. The Hudson's Bay Committee made no bones about its attitude. The posts were told in 1799 that 'we understand that a New North West Company is established at Montreal to oppose us and the present Canadians. We know from Experience what our former Opponents can or in short will do, but as to the New Company they may (under the Notion of out Trading both) ruin the Trade altogether. We therefore think it advisable for our Servants to incline towards our old Competitors rather than give any Countenance to the New and by thus shewing a partiality and keeping up a good understanding with the Canadians who are of course far more powerfull than the New Adventurers can be, it may eventually be the means of this New Company relinquishing their Enterprizes entirely.'

The need for the established concerns to take the opposition thus seriously—even to the extent of mitigating their own rivalry—was shown by two events. The opposition reached even to Athabaska in 1799; there the firm of Forsyth and Ogilvy set up a post on the lake near to Fort Chipewyan. This was a thrust into the Eldorado of the north-west which even the Hudson's Bay Company had not yet

been able to accomplish, for it was only in this year that York definitely abandoned the Athabaska project to Churchill and William Auld was sent up to establish Green Lake, Peter Fidler went to build Bolsover House at Meadow Lake and then to build Greenwich House on Lac la Biche (from which he made his way in the winter to Athabaska River and Lesser Slave Lake), and William Linklater went to build for the Company at Ile-à-la-Crosse. So the 'Free-traders' had reached Athabaska while the Hudson's Bay men were still only showing long-delayed signs of a purposeful approach (still from the direction of the Saskatchewan and the south, not by the direct line of Lake Wollaston which David Thompson had advocated).

The second event which emphasised the need to take the 'Free-traders' seriously, perhaps even more important than their invasion of Athabaska, was that in 1799 they were organised into a new, purposeful and well-led, opposition. Until that year Alexander Mackenzie had perforce to remain within the North West concern, mollified to some extent by the expansion to forty-six shares and the inclusion of some of his supporters, but unable to accept the victory of Simon McTavish and the rising predominance of William McGillivray within the reorganised concern. He had been placated to some extent by a partnership in the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Co., but that was due to run out in 1799; yet while it lasted it kept him from too close contact with the winterers. The events of 1794-5, particularly the separation of the Montreal trade from New York by the firm delineation of the American frontier, led to re-assessment of the procedure for getting Canadian furs into the United States so that they might be shipped to China regardless of the privileges of the East India Company, which would operate if the furs ever came to the London market. In 1794 John Jacob Astor came to London to negotiate an agreement by which he, as an American citizen, might act as New York agent for the North West Company for this purpose, and though Astor complicated this negotiation by buying beaver in London on terms of credit which seemed crazy to John Fraser, the need to ship furs to China, and to do so from New York, remained. So, as Alexander Mackenzie's period drew to a close, and as the wintering partners at their annual meeting at Grand Portage in 1798 showed themselves solid behind him in his criticisms of the McTavish-McGillivray management, the agents packed him away from too active association with the dissidents and sent him to New York. There Mackenzie spent 1798 and the early months of 1799, negotiating access under the American flag to the

markets of China and of Europe for the Northwesters' furs. It was a difficult business, complicated by some distrust of the Canton agents and the need to send James Hallowell as supercargo to watch the Northwesters' interests (this was the second James Hallowell; the father had retired from the concern in some dudgeon in 1795). On top of the risks and troubles of organising the 'China venture' of the North West Company in 1798 and 1799, Mackenzie was also experimenting with shipments direct from New York to Hamburg. There also the market was difficult and disappointing, but Mackenzie was kept busy, and absent from Montreal.

His experience in these negotiations merely sharpened Mackenzie's purpose. He emerged confirmed in his view that the salvation of the fur trade lay in the north-west, in access to the Pacific and in absorption of the Hudson's Bay Company's rights; not in collaboration with Americans. And he emerged with renewed mistrust of the agents, for they failed on the London market, and in the end London proved, as always, the dominant market. There furs were scarce in 1798, and John Fraser thought there was a chance of a good sale if a small ship could get out from the St. Lawrence late in the year. The Hudson's Bay Committee had furs in stock, but they held their hand and in the end made a very good price. The London furriers at this time were organised in a buyers' ring; but though the Hudson's Bay Committee broke the ring by holding on to their furs, the Northwesters were unable to profit by the opportunity. They were involved in under-the-counter deals which entailed 'arrangements' before the public sales, and in one such deal with a continental dealer called Boccus they saw many of their expectations collapse. For Boccus bought largely on credit, but failed to sell his furs in war-ridden Europe. He returned from the continent in 1800 with great losses; he owed about £30,000, of which £12,655 was due to McTavish, Fraser and Co., and further difficulty arose because Schneider, the great rival, struck out on his own at this time and set up two young men as his buying agents in London. But they had very little capital, and so John Fraser was at a loss where to sell the North West furs. Moreover the North West furs when they became available were not of the same high quality as those of the Hudson's Bay Company. The latter were the finest parcel ever seen in London, the cream of the produce of all the Company's posts, and they were most carefully sorted and graded before sale. The North West consignment, by contrast, contained so many small skins, poorly furred, that there was some suspicion (probably justified) that the returns had been culled and the best taken

for the China venture, of which John Fraser in any case disapproved. The winter of 1798-9 was, moreover, one of very severe weather in which England was cut off from contact with the fur-market in Germany for almost three weeks in the spring, so that there seemed little chance of the brokers buying in hope of getting the furs to the Leipzig fair, and there seems little cause for astonishment that John Fraser should at this time have been driven to desperation by the plight to which McTavish, Fraser and Co. were reduced.

All of this was better known to Alexander Mackenzie at New York than it would have been had he gone inland. He knew, too, that active opposition to the North West Company in the wintering-grounds had taken a new turn in 1797 when the firm of Forsyth, Richardson & Co. had begun to organise the independent winterers and to supply them. This had resulted in a co-partnership agreement in October 1798, between Forsyth, Richardson & Co., Leith, Jamieson & Co., and a group of six winterers. Mackenzie could not become a member of such a co-partnership yet; he was still bound to the old company. But the resignation of Joseph Frobisher from the concern in 1798 increased that predominance of McTavish and McGillivray which he found so hard to stomach, and he appears in 1799 to have given warning that he would not renew his engagement.

Mackenzie therefore had more than adequate reasons for mistrusting both the management and the business prospects of the North West Company in 1799, and his mistrust cannot have been allayed by a quarrel in which McTavish, Frobisher and Co. now became involved. They sued Messrs. Parker, Gerrard and Co., for non-fulfilment of a contract, suing in their own names and not as agents of the general concern, and it developed in the process that the other partners might well sue McTavish, Frobisher & Co., for their shares of the damages if the suit should be successful. Mackenzie could not remain in such a concern, especially as he seems to have had a further misunderstanding with William McGillivray in 1799. He departed in a fit of ill humour from Montreal and by the end of October he was in London. He had quitted the concern, was obsessed by his grievances, feeling vindictive and throwing out threats of revenge. John Fraser found him 'modest over money', with no scheme of business in view, perhaps disposed to an amicable settlement and with no intention of interfering in the trade except by his influence over the winterers. But he had 'got an entire ascendant over your young men', as Fraser told the agents.

While Mackenzie was thus making up his mind in London the

opposition was taking shape. As the North West agents sent their men off to their posts, McTavish was appreciating that other Montreal and Quebec firms would be 'up with the opposition parties going in to the Northwest' that year. William McGillivray, it is true, was not unduly alarmed. He reported that the opposition had been able to send but few goods inland in 1798-9 and that they were 'very quiet'. They seemed to have differences among themselves and to be dominated by their wilder men, so that McGillivray hoped that they would be restrained by difficulty in recruiting *voyageurs*, and might curtail their plan.

The hopes of John Fraser in London and of William McGillivray in Montreal proved equally misplaced. The co-partnership of Forsyth, Richardson & Co., and of Leith, Jamieson & Co., was already being called the XY Company in 1799, and was indeed using this mark on its goods. It carried the opposition even into Athabaska, as did the firm of Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy, and in 1800 Mackenzie himself, now free of his commitments, joined the co-partnership which by then consisted of Forsyth, Richardson and Co., Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy and Co., John Mure and Co., Phyn, Inglis and Co., and Leith, Jamieson and Co.

It was a formidable combination, this XY Company of which the Hudson's Bay Committee warned its chiefs and traders. The strange title seems to have derived merely from the letters used to mark its bales of goods. After the bales marked 'N.W. Co.' it seemed sensible to mark the new concern's goods with 'XY Co.', and the title stuck. To the Hudson's Bay men the new opposition, especially in its early days, was the 'New Northwest Company', and this in effect it was—bound by co-partnership agreement for a period of years in the same way as the North West Company, and based upon personalities, knowledge and experience which derived from the experience of that company.

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CHAPTER X

THE XY COMPANY; SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE AND COMPANY

With the accession of Alexander Mackenzie the New North West Company, the 'Little Company', the 'Potties' as the Northwesters called them, gained in strength, unity and purpose. Their own rivalries, such as that which took both Forsyth, Richardson and Company, and Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy to Athabaska in 1799, were merged in a common organisation; and Mackenzie brought to them so much of a common purpose that the XY Company as enlarged into the New North West Company in 1800 was soon called Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company. He, indeed, was the directing spirit. His mastery over the winterers was one of the great assets of the new concern, his hostility to Simon McTavish and William McGillivray was one of its chief incentives.

But Alexander Mackenzie was animated by other ideas than simple direct opposition to the 'Old Concern'. For some years he had nursed his conviction that the correct solution to the problems of the fur trade of the north-west would be to ship the trade-goods in through Hudson Bay, not through the St. Lawrence. He was much in England at this time, and in 1801 he there published his *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans*, with his *Preliminary Account of the Rise, progress and present state of the Fur Trade*. This gave his magnificent exploits the publicity which had hitherto not been accorded, it secured for him a Knighthood in 1802, gave him the ear of Cabinet Ministers, and turned him from a disgruntled partner in a private fur-trading concern into the statesman of fur trade policy. Or almost so; for while Mackenzie was encouraged and was given a chance to air his views of a combined and comprehensive 'Fur and Fishery Company', he failed to get them adopted.

Although his *Account of the Fur Trade* contains many references to events running up to the end of the old agreement of the North West Company in 1799, such references are (it appears) later interjections and the serious narrative does not run past Mackenzie's arrival at Chipewyan, preparatory to his Arctic Voyage, in 1789. His only serious assessment of the problem of rivalry for the trade

was his hazard that 'it now remains to be decided, whether two parties, under the same regulations and by the same exertions, though unequal in numbers, can continue to carry on the business to a successful issue. The contrary opinion has been held, which, if verified, will make it the interest of the parties again to coalesce; for neither is deficient in capital to support their obstinacy in a losing trade, as it is not to be supposed that either will yield on any other terms than perpetual participation'. This in 1801 was prophetic defiance of the 'Old Concern'. But a more trenchant analysis of the situation came at the very end of the volume, even after his geographical description of the country. Here Mackenzie discussed the great advantages (as he saw them) of running the fur trade in a 'common concern' which would trade under the privileges of the Hudson's Bay Company's Charter. This would enable such easy access to be made to the Saskatchewan and to the Rocky Mountains that a thriving trade could then be driven down the Columbia to the Pacific and so to the market of China.

Here Mackenzie was thinking constructively—and imperially, for he was much concerned to wrest the trade of the Pacific coast from the hands of the Americans who conducted their trade from ship-board. He pushed his ideas too; and he was speaking and writing on behalf of a concern which was certainly equal in status to the old North West Company and which, by 1802, claimed to be equal also in the amount of capital which it had available. Mackenzie put his ideas to Lord Hobart as Colonial Secretary. He wanted the British government to establish three posts on the Pacific coast, the chief at Nootka, with two subordinate posts on the Columbia River and in Sea Otter Harbour. The exclusive privileges of the East India Company, of the South Sea Company and of the Hudson's Bay Company were then all to be called into the project, either by outright repeal or else by the exaction of licences to trade and fish and establish posts on the Pacific coast and at Canton. The Hudson's Bay Company was to allow traffic through its territories with the right to examine goods at the first port of entry but not at any internal post.

The first step, as Hobart realised, was that the two North West Companies should agree to amalgamate. But this was not possible in 1801-2, though Mackenzie maintained that if either of them were given an exclusive charter the other would make reasonable terms; there were personal vendettas involved which made any such step impossible. Simon McTavish was so angry at the mistrust of himself which had led to the split of 1799, and at the attempt to under-

mine William McGillivray which precipitated that crisis, that he cut himself off from personal correspondence even with the winterers who remained in the 'Old Concern' and wrote them a most angry and hurt general letter; he certainly could not easily be brought to a reconciliation with the rebels.

On the contrary, McTavish reorganised the 'Old Concern' with a new general agreement, due to take effect at the end of 1802 and to last for twenty years. The discussions which preceded this attempt 'now to form a more regular, solid and permanent system' lasted through 1801 and 1802. In the end the number of shares was doubled, from forty-six to ninety-two, of which McTavish, Frobisher & Co. (now in effect McTavish, McGillivray & Co.) held thirty, with the right to manage all the business at Montreal, to import all the necessary merchandise, hire clerks and other employees, and to make the necessary advances at a charge of four per cent. on the cost of each year's outfit and to charge five per cent. on the cost of all goods imported for the first year of their purchase and then six per cent. until payment was complete. The winterers were given more power, with a right for four of them to go every year to Montreal; but any member who traded privately in competition with the general concern was to be fined £5,000. New partners were to be elected by the whole concern, and retiring partners were to sell their shares only to the concern (though they were allowed to retain a 'retired share') and so the concern was in a way made more democratic. But on the whole the reorganisation was a great victory for the 'Marquis' McTavish. It gave him and William McGillivray a close-knit partnership from which defection was almost impossible. The concern was to take over trade-goods from the agents at Grand Portage at twenty-five per cent. over the cost at Montreal; in the north-west, except in 'English River', at fifty-seven per cent. over cost at Grand Portage, and in 'English River and beyond', i.e. in Athabaska and Peace River, at ninety per cent. increase on prices at Grand Portage. Added to this clause was the significant proviso 'And as the Company have in view to extend their Posts to other and more distant parts in the North West, towards the Rocky Mountain and beyond it, the charge on goods at all such Posts shall be regulated according to the expense of sending them thither, when known'.

The 'Old Concern', thus reorganised, had its purposes clearly in view, and its leadership was not in question. True, McTavish had to admit something of a defeat in that John Fraser secured for himself a half-share of the profits from McTavish, Fraser & Co.'s business instead of his previous one-third share, and got freedom to

engage in other business such as cotton-broking. But the market looked good in spite of the war—'Furs are coming very much into fashion here (for our luxury, *in every shape whatever*, increases with the pressure) and the best will probably continue to support good prices'. So reasoning, even John Fraser was optimistic, though he mistrusted the China venture still. McTavish, Frobisher and Co., were sanguine too, and they bought a new ship in London, the *Montreal* of 380 tons. The 'Old Concern' was as expansive in its views as the New Company, and like Mackenzie himself it was concerned with plans to develop the fur trade of the Pacific coast and to make the best use of Hudson Bay as a supplement to the St. Lawrence.

As a counterpart to interest in the fur trade, the 'Old Concern' took advantage of the way in which the fishing and trading rights of the old French King's Posts in the St. Lawrence basin were periodically brought to public auction, and in July 1802 bought 'the Stock of the King's Domains or Tadousac Posts' for £1,025 (currency) together with the lease of the seigneurie of Mille Vaches, and placed Angus Shaw in command. This purchase greatly enlarged the territory in which the Northwesters might legitimately trade. It was, of course, fur rather than fish which interested them, and exploitation of their concession brought them to Lake Mistassini, where they were only four days' journey from the Hudson's Bay post at Birch Point. But it is doubtful if the King's Posts proved a sound investment. When they came to be assessed (in 1807) the wintering partners decided that the fishing boats and men were too expensive and too little understood, and they disapproved unanimously. They thought that the stock tied up in the posts was out of proportion to the profits, and they hoped to redress the balance by confining their attention solely to the fur trade.

If the King's Posts appear in the light of a somewhat extravagant *riposte* by McTavish to the plans of Mackenzie, his other ventures at this time were more closely tied to the fur trade. He tried (much in the fashion of Aubert de la Chesnay and Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville) to invade the Bottom of the Bay both by land and by sea. Working on from his King's Posts settlements at Lake St. John and at Mistassini, his men were to connect up with a maritime incursion into the Bay itself. This was the voyage of the *Eddystone*, which McTavish sent into the Bay in 1803. Charlton Island was taken as a base for the 'Old Concern', and an outpost on Moose River further proclaimed McTavish's defiance of the Company's Charter and his plan to link a maritime and an overland approach. Both of these

inroads into the Company's domain proved short-lived. But they showed that while Mackenzie and his partners were trying to plan, and to get concessions for, a link between fishing and the fur trade, joining the Bay-route to a continental approach, McTavish was actually at work on the same projects.

Neither the King's Posts nor the inroad into the Bay proved, in the long run, a paying venture. They failed from their own weaknesses, not because the Hudson's Bay Company offered an effective opposition. The Committee were indeed determined to oppose the Canadians, and in 1800 John Ballenden, newly appointed to command at York, was told in set terms that he was expected to produce an increasing trade and to rival the Canadians in Athabaska, a country which could support ten times the number of men which the Canadians and the Company between them could send to the Northward. 'The Character of a British Subject in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company one would suppose would be a stimulus sufficient to counteract in some measure the Canadians', the Committee wrote. But yet they felt that the Northwesters, new or old, had the ear of government and that the Company's chartered rights would not stand a vigorous challenge. So they concluded their exhortation with a command always to keep on friendly terms with the Canadians 'for if any serious Consequences should arise from our Quarrels and Disputes it would be very difficult to find redress here even on application to Government'.

This attitude went with the building of a new post at Eastmain, the ordering of a new sloop, and something of a new spirit of enterprise in Athabaska. After the renewed attempt of the Hudson's Bay men to approach from the southwards in 1799, Peter Fidler in 1800 led his men up the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and built Chesterfield House there. It was not good beaver country however, and in 1802 Fidler moved north, crossed Portage La Loche (Methy Portage) and built Nottingham House, the first Hudson's Bay post in Athabaska, on the lake itself, a bare mile from the North West post at Fort Chipewyan. He was to prove susceptible to the bullying tactics of the Canadians, but Fidler was an intrepid traveller, at home with the Indians, and an accurate surveyor. In this year his maps were sent to Mr. Arrowsmith, to help in the delineation of the North American continent, and Alexander Dalrymple as hydrographer to the Admiralty also had his attention called to Fidler's contribution to north-western geography.

But Fidler's attempts to place the Hudson's Bay Company on an equal footing with the Northwesters by giving their brigades access

to the pemmican of Peace River failed. In urging a new approach to Athabaska the Committee had said 'It has also been alledged that the Country to the Northward is destitute of provisions *except Fish*, but we know this is not the fact for the Canadian Traders procure large Quantities of Provisions dryed Buffalo etc. etc. which they take with them to their Colleagues down the River to their Station near Cumberland House where they winter'. To get this essential access to pemmican Fidler sent Thomas Swain to build Mansfield House on Peace River in 1802. Swain got no pemmican, for the Northwesters were in close rivalry, and he abandoned his post and dropped down to finish the winter with Fidler at Nottingham House. There also fierce rivalry, with the mixture of bullying, cajolery and generosity (especially in rum) which marked the Northwesters' trade, prevented the Hudson's Bay men from getting provisions and left them with very few furs. Fidler was forced to dry fish for his journey down to the coast, and his returns in 1803 were only 253 beaver.

It was not an auspicious challenge to the Northwesters; and the Hudson's Bay men, tied by their Committee's firm instructions to avoid incidents, were made light of by both the New and the Old North West Companies. They were far too complaisant. Fidler pleased the Committee by the 'Harmony' which he managed to maintain with the servants of the 'Old Concern', though he found the Canadians so greedy that they wanted every skin. At the Bottom of the Bay the agreement not to entice Indians was followed up by a North West proposal for a mutual abandonment of posts, and the Committee so far welcomed the proposal as to leave it to the judgment of the traders to decide which posts might be withdrawn—but with the reminder that 'the superior Quality of our Trading Goods will always command a preference with the Natives'.

It is exceedingly difficult to gauge the temper of the Hudson's Bay Committee's response to the challenge of the two separate North West Companies, for both the Minutes and the Correspondence Books are most reticent on this point. The key to the situation probably lies in the fact that though the struggle of the two Canadian companies was bitter in the extreme, and led to great developments, yet it took but three or four years of trade to work itself out; and during that brief period the Hudson's Bay Committee had not assessed the situation accurately enough to formulate a firm and coherent policy. Hence the insistence on avoiding incidents, the instructions to push into Athabaska, and even the supply of men and goods especially for that purpose, the wish to evade a direct legal

challenge, and the willingness to talk with both sides. How far this apparent lack of policy might have carried cannot now be guessed. Within the Company the Minutes, Letters and Instructions, carry an air of quiet confidence which leaves the impression that there never was any doubt of the Company's position and future. The London sales were going well for the Company though the European war made the market difficult for wolves and small skins, and returns from the posts, despite the unbridled competition of the Canadians, showed steady decline rather than violent collapse; after rising to 94,000 Made-beaver in 1801 they declined to 63,000 in 1803, rising again to almost 70,000 by 1805. The dividend accordingly was dropped from six per cent. in 1800 to four per cent. in 1801; but this was steadily maintained, and it was an indication of confidence, and of prosperity in the high competition and war conditions which at that time dominated the trade. From all available evidence, therefore, the Company's attitude to the violent activity of these years was an attitude of quiet and confident tolerance combined with shrewd, if not imaginative, insistence upon sound methods of trade, on the high cost of the goods sent out, and on the need for well-planned expansion into the interior.

There was nothing assertive about this, nothing which was even normally enterprising by North West standards, and it is therefore not surprising to find that both the Old and the New North West Companies assumed that they might well be able to absorb or override the Hudson's Bay Company as a step in their rivalry. With his long-term conviction of the need to incorporate the Hudson's Bay route into his comprehensive plans for a North American and Pacific fur-and-fishing trade, Alexander Mackenzie set Edward Ellice, partner in the firm of Phyn, Ellice and Co., which acted as London agent for the XY Company, to buy control of the Hudson's Bay Company. This, of course, was a perfectly open and legitimate move; all that was needed was to find enough owners of the stock who were willing to sell at a price which Ellice could afford, and it was thought that about £103,000 would give a majority-holding of the Company's stock. Such a move would be made easier if some existing holders, especially committee-men, could be brought to favour the granting of amenities to the XY Company. So while Ellice tried to buy up stock, Mackenzie tried to soften the Committee. Neither of these approaches is recorded in any way in the Company's documents. As far as official policy and corporate action were concerned, the Company went serenely on its way and the project was merely the unrealistic ambition of men who did not

understand the staid stability which had come to predominate in the meetings at Fenchurch Street.

Parallel with the project of Mackenzie and Ellice was a move from the 'Old Concern'. Their action in sending the *Eddystone* to Charlton Island in 1803 was known to the Hudson's Bay Committee well in advance, and when reports began to come through they briefed their lawyers, retained the best counsel available, and prepared to accept the challenge to their basic chartered rights.¹ At the same time as this open challenge to its legal claims came upon it (and while Ellice was trying to buy control of those claims and Mackenzie was trying to secure enjoyment of them) the 'Old Concern' also made an amicable approach. Duncan McGillivray, brother of William, and nephew of Simon McTavish, was as deeply convinced as Alexander Mackenzie of the need to expand the North West trade to the Pacific coast and so to the markets of Canton. He also saw the need, with such a purpose in view, to use the Hudson's Bay route to the Rockies (or at least to Lake Winnipeg) instead of the long canoe-route from Montreal. To him the mutual advantages of an 'accommodation' with the Hudson's Bay Company had been clear as soon as he heard of Mackenzie's journey to the Pacific. By 1802, like Mackenzie, he either thought that the Hudson's Bay Company did not realise the asset which the Bay-route gave to them, or he thought that they adopted so short-term a view of the developments that they would surrender this long-term advantage for immediate gain. So Duncan McGillivray came to London in 1804 and asked the Governor and Committee to discuss with him a proposal for granting to the 'Old Concern' a concession which would allow use of the Bay-route. Here there was a strange mixture of bluster and realism, for McGillivray first asked for discussions on an arrangement to avoid incidents in the fur trade; then, a meeting having been arranged, came a forthright statement that the North West Company claimed the right to trade and navigate in the Bay. This was later elaborated into a claim of right to use the Bay as an approach to Lake Winnipeg, *en route* for the Rockies and the Pacific, with an offer that although this was claimed as a right due to British subjects yet the North West Company would abandon the post on Charlton Island if the Hudson's Bay Company would concede the right.

Both North West Companies were probably at a loss to understand the slow reaction of the Hudson's Bay Committee to these overtures. To them the offers probably appeared not ungenerous.

¹ Cf. p.p. 257-59 *infra*.

They were offering a reasonable consideration for something of whose value the present owners had no idea. To them the Hudson's Bay Committee appeared ordinary London business men who could not be expected to have any deep loyalty to the fur trade as such. Even when, like Governor Sir James Winter Lake, or committeemen Charles Merry, George Samuel Wegg and Joseph Berens, they were the second or third generation to hold shares, they were not fur traders in the active, adventurous, and dedicated way that Simon McTavish, Alexander Mackenzie or William McGillivray were. Yet these staid and conservative business men, between them, had a very keen grasp of reality. They knew the dangers of competition in the fur trade, they knew the straits to which it must surely reduce their rivals; and they did nothing in a hurry.

In fact, while the overtures from both North West Companies were stalled, the positive action which the Committee took was to seek legal opinion on the Company's chartered rights. Legal opinion in 1805 differed but little from that of 1749. Then the Crown lawyers had been undecided whether the Company would be able to sustain a claim to exclude other subjects from trade to the Bay, and had hoped for a test-case to clear the issue. Now the Company's lawyers were still doubtful, and thought that a prosecution for trading to Charlton Island might well go against the Company. But they were quite confident that, whatever the position with regard to an exclusive right to trade, the Crown was able to grant away the lands and islands within the Bay, and had in fact done so in its Charter to the Company.

It therefore emerged that the Company would have to stand on its own feet as a trading corporation, and survive or decline according to its own commercial competence. This had always been true, for the grant of exclusive trade had never sheltered the Company from the competition of the French or of their successors the Pedlars; it had never given exclusive control of the markets of London or of Europe; and the Company's rules of trade showed realization of this, with emphasis on the quality of the goods and on fair treatment for the Indians. The lawyers' opinion was easily accepted, for it accorded with reality, and no prosecution was launched in defence of the right of exclusive trade. But, as owner of the lands granted by the Charter, the Company was strongly fortified by the opinion of the lawyers, and it was to embark on the next (and vitally important) half-century of its career as a company dependent on competitive, and closely-organised, practices in trade combined with a well-entrenched position as lord of the soil.

As yet, during the years 1802 to 1804, the strength of such a position was not established. The Company appeared in the position of apathetic administrator of assets whose value was quite underdeveloped, and attention and enthusiasm were concentrated on the exploits of the rival Northwesters. Here, although there can be no doubt about the determination to expand to the Pacific which animated Mackenzie and his supporters, the achievements belong rather to the 'Old Concern' than to the New. For this the probable explanation was that although the winterers had so strongly supported Mackenzie in 1798 and 1799, he had carried very few of them into the new company. While by 1802 it was reckoned that the two companies had about equal capital available, it was also estimated that the 'Old Concern' employed about three times as many men as the New; they were tied by their notarial agreements to their old contracts, and lack of men was a definite hardship to the new company. Of a total of between twelve and fourteen hundred men employed inland, the 'New Concern' commanded only about four hundred.

With such resources, and with its deep knowledge of the realities of the trade, the 'Old Concern' was capable of making enormous strides. Nearest to home was a serious attempt to reorganise the essential transport-system in the light of the stabilised American boundary. A boat canal, about half a mile long, was made by the Northwesters on the Canadian side of Sault Ste. Marie in 1798, with a road running along-side of it. The use of the canal was challenged by the XY Company, and the issue was complicated by the fact that finances had been raised before the split of 1799 took place. A similar move took place when the great depot of the Northwesters was moved from the Grand Portage to Kaministiquia. Edward Umfreville's attempt to find an alternative to the route by Grand Portage, in 1784, had failed and the Northwesters had profited by the retention of the Western Posts in British hands until 1796. But Jay's Treaty posed the problem afresh, and Roderick Mackenzie in 1798 retraced the old French route by way of Kaministiquia to Lake Superior. Simon McTavish was soon convinced of the advantages of the route and determined to remove the Company's *rendezvous*. The move of goods and the construction of offices, houses and warehouses, was a work of some years however, and it was 1801 at the earliest before Kaministiquia became the headquarters of the 'Old Concern', 1803 before the fort there was complete, and 1807 before the establishment received the title of Fort William (after William McGillivray) under which it became famous as the centre of the Canadian fur trade.

Of a piece with this far-reaching move was the use which the North West Company made of David Thompson. His first task in his new employ, in 1797-8, took him on a most remarkable journey, even for him, and one in which he was concerned only with survey work, not directly with trade in any way. The problem was to decide exactly where the American boundary, as settled in 1783, lay on the ground, and how the Northwesters' posts stood in relation to it. From Grand Portage he went down Rainy River to Lake Winnipeg and Swan River; then back past the posts on the lower Assiniboine to strike south across the plains (on foot in winter) and reach the headwaters of the Missouri and the Mandan villages. Interested though he was in the settled agricultural life of the Mandans, Thompson was profoundly shocked by their lack of chastity, and comforted himself with the thought that the Missouri and all its villages lay within the United States, which would therefore have the duty of bringing Christianity to the Mandans. From the Missouri he went back north to the Assiniboine in the New Year (1798) and then followed it down to the Forks and so south on Red River to Pembina (which he also found to be in United States territory) and eastwards up Red Lake River to Red Lake. Abandoning his canoe here, he made his way on foot to 'Turtle Lake, which is the head of the Mississippi River'. Thompson was not quite right about this, for the Mississippi rises a few miles from Turtle Lake. Nor was he right in his explanation of the reason why the boundary-makers of 1783 had thought that the great river rose many miles to the south of its actual source (an explanation based on the fact that *voyageurs* reckoned their distances by pipes, and counted a league of three miles as the distance between pipes; but since they actually stopped for a pipe every two miles instead of three, they greatly exaggerated the distances which they covered). But he was quite correct in his demonstration that, in drawing the frontier from the north-west corner of Lake of the Woods to the source of the Mississippi, the diplomats had unwittingly given to America many hundreds of square miles of territory which the Canadian fur-trader had formerly enjoyed.

From the source of the Mississippi Thompson continued eastwards to Lake Superior at Fond du Lac, surveyed the south shore of the lake and arrived at Sault Ste. Marie late in May. There he met the agents of the Company, going up to Grand Portage from Montreal, and they asked him to continue and complete his survey of Lake Superior. Thompson therefore mapped the north and east shores and arrived at Grand Portage in time to witness the annual

meetings and outfittings. Alexander Mackenzie told him he had performed more in ten months than he expected could be done in two years. Apart from the sheer extent of the survey, and the power to keep going through winter and summer, the journey is remarkable for the fact that Thompson thereby gave firm definition to the American boundary line from the fur-traders' point of view.

From the certainty which Thompson had brought to this question, the trade had to be reassessed. The boundary was more of a hardship than had been expected. But Simon McTavish was determined that losses to the south should be replaced by expansion in the north and west. His hopes lay in the China trade and in new discoveries in Athabaska as the answer alike to the challenge of the New Company and to the definition of the frontier, and here again David Thompson came into the picture. In 1798 he was back on the Upper Saskatchewan, surveying for his new employers the route to Beaver Lake, Churchill River, Lac la Ronge, Ile-à-la-Crosse and so to Athabaska; he spent a year travelling in these areas, north and west from Fort George and Fort Augustus to Lac la Biche and Lesser Slave Lake and south and west to Rocky Mountain House, on the Saskatchewan. After a visit to Grand Portage in the summer of 1800 he was back at Rocky Mountain House in October; there he was joined by Duncan McGillivray, come to winter and to prepare to cross the mountains.

Here Thompson was embarking on a project which was to prove formative in the history of the North-American fur trade—as vital as the demarcation of the American frontier south of the lakes, and expansive where that operation was definitive. Thompson spent the rest of the year working southwards from Rocky Mountain House, to Red Deer River and then to Bow River, both tributaries of the South Saskatchewan, before he settled down in December to winter at Rocky Mountain House. At the foot of the mountains he had met a band of Kootenay Indians who had crossed the mountains in the hope of trade, and he sent them back with two of his French *voyageurs*, La Gassi and Le Blanc, probably the first two white men to cross the Rockies from the Saskatchewan to the Columbia. This was the problem: for although Alexander Mackenzie had indeed reached the Pacific coast, his route (from Lake Athabaska up Peace River and so by Parsnip River to the Fraser, the Blackwater and Bella Coola Sound) was so difficult as to be almost impossible as a fur trade route. Something easier, and more to the south, was needed if plans for incorporating the Pacific coast and the China trade in the fur trade of Canada were to come to anything.

Duncan McGillivray was the chief protagonist of these ideas within the 'Old Concern'. He had met Mackenzie on the latter's return from his voyage to the Pacific. Stationed at Fort George on the upper waters of the North Branch of the Saskatchewan, he witnessed the penetration of the rival posts ever further up the rivers—to Fort Augustus in 1795 and then to Rocky Mountain House in 1799—and he managed some trade with Kootenay Indians whom the rival Piegans had driven westwards over the mountains. From Rocky Mountain House Duncan planned and worked for the 'Columbian Enterprise' of the North West Company. As yet, during the period of rivalry with the New Company, little success was to attend his ventures. But essential pioneer work was carried out. McGillivray supplemented Thompson's journeys by working north from Rocky Mountain House into the valley of the Athabaska River; then he accompanied Thompson in the journey to Bow River and in the spring of 1801 he sent Thompson and a party up the Saskatchewan to follow the Sheep River into the mountains until the route became impossible. He was not fit to go on this journey himself, but later in 1801 he led an expedition which crossed the Rockies from Bow River, over White Man's Pass to McGillivray's River (a branch of the Kootenay) and so to Kootenay Lake. He returned by way of Athabaska Pass. Duncan McGillivray had not reached the Pacific coast, but he had crossed the Rockies. His route, or any alternative to it, nevertheless still seemed of no commercial value if it had to depend upon the long transit from Montreal to the Saskatchewan as a preliminary. So (partly for reasons of health) Duncan came down from Rocky Mountain House, was made a partner in the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Co. in 1802, and busied himself in the organisation of the business at Kaministiquia and in forwarding the essential negotiations which would (he hoped) give his concern the right to use the Hudson's Bay route as an approach to the Rockies.

With so much which was constructive and progressive, the North-westerners mingled much which was irresponsible and indefensible. The tradition of the Pedlars' trade was a tradition of purposefulness which bordered on ruthlessness. As far back as 1786 Tomison and his fellow-officers at York Fort had penned a letter to the Commander-in-Chief of Canada which ran: 'Good Sir, it grieves us to see a body of Indians destroyed by a set of Men, merely for self Interest, doing all in their Power to Destroy Posterity, so we hope that your Excellency will make such regulations as will preserve Posterity, and not to be Destroyed by fiery double Distilled Rum from Canada'.

Spirits, as the Hudson's Bay men had long realised, were the one known means of turning the tables on the Indian. When rival white men outbid each other for his furs, and still more for his provisions, the Indian exploited to the full the advantages which competition in a seller's market gave to him; he became greedy, idle, insolent, and so improvident that the trade was in serious danger of complete ruin and himself in danger of starvation. It was only his passion for spirits which could then jerk the Indian from his commanding position, turn the trade so that the European controlled it and the Indian became an eager buyer instead of a reluctant seller.

A realistic acceptance of this unsavoury fact was common to both North West Companies, and indeed to the Hudson's Bay men too. 'The Canadians is going through the Barren Ground with Rum, like so many ravenous Wolves, seeking whom they may devour' wrote William Tomison in 1787. But although the war prevented shipment of French brandy and forced the Hudson's Bay Committee to fall back on 'English brandy', or gin, or rum, they nevertheless felt that they had a strong advantage over the Canadians. For the Hudson's Bay Committee sent out a still to York Fort and there organised the distillation of 'High Spirits', doubly distilled and over-proof for transport in concentrated form, in large quantities. Joseph Colen became so expert that he could distil both red and white 'waters for Inland use'. Similar plants were in use at Moose and at Albany, and the Committee promised themselves great advantages in this over the Canadians, especially when a war-time scarcity of grain caused a government ban on distillation in England. The ban, and the normal functioning of the grain market, together with the influx of methods and habits from the American trade, led to a steady preponderance of rum in the fur trade. Rum rose to four times its normal value in furs, and though the Hudson's Bay posts were equipped to make 'molasses spirit' on the spot, the idea did not take on, and like the Northwesters the Hudson's Bay men became dependent upon imports, with the grievance that their rivals scored heavily—not only because they took such large quantities inland but also because, their own stills having failed to treat rum, they found that the Northwesters had learned their lesson and it was a double-distilled and extra strong spirit which they took inland.

Spirits are a commodity for which the figures of bulk consumption mean very little unless the strength is known. But something of the flow of trade can be gathered from the fact that when the rivalry of the two North West Companies was well under way the consumption of spirits rose from an average of 9,600 gallons to 10,098 gal-

lons in 1800; and in 1803 the 'Old Concern' used 16,299 gallons and their rivals over 5,000 gallons, so that the quantity had been more than doubled in the two years.

Spirits were not the only commodity which was traded more lavishly during the struggle. Presents of Chief's or Captain's outfits were freely given by all sides in attempts to win the loyalty of leading Indians, and the standards of trade fell until in 1803 forty-four packs ('pieces') of goods produced only eleven packs of furs even from Athabaska River. Peter Fidler might be able to get but few furs himself, but at least he could point the moral of the rivalry between the Canadians—the contrast between the pre-rivalry returns for the 'Old Concern' of 648 packs of prime furs from fifteen half-loaded canoes of goods, and the return of 182 packs from twenty-eight loaded canoes in 1803. The New Company suffered in such competition even more than its well-established rivals. From Athabaska it brought out only two packs of furs in 1800, ten in 1801, thirty-one in 1802 and eighty-four in 1804—meagre returns on the ten canoes sent in each year from 1800 onwards.

This disastrous decline occurred despite the bullying and cajoling of the Indians in which both parties indulged, and of which the records carry ample testimony. Even the docile Chipewyans were driven to revolt and massacre by the summer of 1804; and bullying of Indians was but a part of the general approach to trade rivalry which marked these men. The habit of building posts side by side in the Indian country meant that the rivals spent their long winters in close quarters. At times old friendships and human qualities prevailed, and the rivals spent their days without enmity: always they seem to have been willing to help each other (as the Hudson's Bay men helped both) with food to ward off starvation, and sometimes they even helped with trade-goods. But where furs and the friendship of Indians were concerned there was little room for anything but fierce strife. Here the Hudson's Bay men stood on one side; steadily exhorted to avoid brutal conduct, they were not involved in the more bitter incidents. But, between the rival Northwesters, claims for the skins of indebted Indians were the most frequent cause for actual violence which, on more than one occasion, led to murder.

The most celebrated case of the kind was that in which, in August 1802, the young XY Company's clerk, Lamothe, murdered the North West bully James King in a dispute in which the young man was defending some furs which he had traded. The resultant stir in government circles revealed the amount of intimidation, pilfering,

and incitement of Indians, which was going on. As has so often happened in the history of colonial expansion, it became clear that the traders' frontier had outstripped government and that it was essential for competent jurisdiction to overtake the traders and establish law and order among them. The British Parliament passed the Canada Jurisdiction Act in August 1803, and henceforth the Governor (or Lieutenant-Governor) of Lower Canada was empowered to nominate Justices of the Peace for the Indian territories (which included Rupert's Land) with power to commit the guilty to Lower Canada 'to be dealt with according to the law'. It was also made legal for any person whatever to arrest, and to take to Lower Canada for trial, anyone guilty of crimes 'in the Indian country'—but this defeated its purpose, for such a permit made it possible for rivals to arrest each other without warrant and to take them down to Montreal, out of the way of the Indians, for a year or so.

With its defects the Canada Jurisdiction Act was still a serious effort to mitigate the known evil results of the rivalry between the two Canadian companies. But by 1803 the rivalry was reaching such a stage that Alexander Mackenzie's early feeling, that an accommodation might ensue, was fulfilled. In July 1804 Simon McTavish died, and with his dominating personality removed the way lay open for reconciliation. In November of that year the Old and the New North West Companies amalgamated, to form a joint concern of a hundred shares for twenty years. Of the hundred shares seventy-five went to the 'Old Concern' and twenty-five to the XY Company. So, with recent experience of bitter and even homicidal rivalry, the North West Company consolidated itself for a renewed challenge to the Hudson's Bay Company. It had at its disposal the masterful talents of both William McGillivray and Sir Alexander Mackenzie; it had the London agencies of both McTavish, Fraser and Company and also of Phyn, Inglis and Company; it had the Montreal agencies of McTavish, Frobisher and Company and also of Forsyth, Richardson and Company; it had the posts of both former companies spread through the north-west, through Athabaska, up Peace River and to the foot of the Rockies; and it had the great talent and capacity of the traders and servants of both companies.

Changes were imminent, to confirm and enhance even these great assets. The Frobishers had gone from the trade, and the old firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company became McTavish, McGillivray and Company. In London too, Phyn, Inglis and Company became Ellice, Inglis and Company. But these changes made little difference. It was a most powerful and purposeful combination

which the Hudson's Bay men faced in 1805, so powerful and so purposeful that the issue seemed inevitable and the 'Agreement' of the North West Company contained a clause which allowed for expansion of the share of the XY partners if the Hudson's Bay Company should sell the whole of its rights; if only a right of transit could be got, such as Duncan McGillivray was trying to negotiate, then the proportions of the trade were to remain unaltered. Such confidence was well warranted by the knowledge, enterprise, and volume of trade which the combined North West Company had behind it in 1805.

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CHAPTER XI

THE COLUMBIA ENTERPRISE

The two North West Companies in their amalgamation were more concerned to end their rivalry with each other than to come to a conclusion with the Hudson's Bay Company; and in so far as the Hudson's Bay Company entered their considerations at that time their interests were bent to secure a right of transit through the Bay rather than to drive home their joint superiority in the fur trade of the 'Grand North'. The new united concern was not complacent however, although it certainly saw no immediately urgent need to drive the Hudson's Bay Company out of trade. On the contrary, it was in a purposeful and constructive mood, determined to thrust its trade across the continent to the Pacific coast and to claim a share in that trade to Canton round which both partners in the coalition had centred their ideas. It was in order to shorten the route to the foot of the Rockies, and so to make their conquest easier, that Alexander Mackenzie, Simon McTavish and Duncan McGillivray had, each in his turn, wished to use the Bay-route; and when the deed of amalgamation had been completed (with due allowance for contingencies in case Duncan McGillivray's negotiations should prove successful) the joint concern turned without hesitation to further this project of developing the Pacific trade.

This was a clear and enterprising approach to the fundamental problems of the fur trade, problems of a search for new sources of furs and for new markets in which to sell them. It was made in a suitably fundamental manner, for it was accepted that the use of the Bay-route was essential to the success of the project. So vital was the Bay-route to the Saskatchewan and the Rockies that when the North West Company had established itself upon the Pacific coast and was getting considerable returns from across the Rockies, Duncan McGillivray wrote that the trade still made a considerable annual loss since the furs did not pay the cost of transport to Montreal for shipment to England. It was in high hope that the Hudson's Bay route might be made available to them that the Northwesters embarked on their 'Columbia Enterprise' which, they knew, depended on the success of this negotiation. In 1805 the annual meeting at Kaministiquia told its agents to offer up to £2,000 a year for the right of transit on condition that they would promise not to trade

near the Bay, and Duncan McGillivray returned to London to press this proposal in that year.

Awaiting the outcome of these negotiations with some confidence, the partners of the united North West Company began to work to achieve that conquest of the Rockies which would be necessary, if the Hudson's Bay route were made available, in order to tie the Pacific trade to Canada. And although Sir Alexander Mackenzie's route from Peace River was accepted as too difficult for trade it was fitting that one of the first moves should be in the direction which he had indicated. In 1805 the partners at Kaministiquia instructed Simon Fraser and John Stuart to make their way up the Peace River and, following Mackenzie's route *via* the Parsnip River, to the headwaters of the Fraser. They were to establish posts from which trade could be conducted and from which an attempt to establish a route over the mountains could be launched. Here was the origin of the Department of New Caledonia. Never closely defined, but roughly covering the territory from 50° to 59° North, to the west of the mountains, the Department not only reveals the purpose of the Company but also shows that one result of the amalgamation of 1804 was to pose a problem of redundancy. With so many partners (and with the number of shares increased from ninety-two to a hundred in 1805) there were not enough posts within the existing bounds of the trade, and expansion into new territory was necessary for this, as for other reasons.

Simon Fraser went up to Rocky Mountain House in the summer of 1805; he reconnoitred up the Peace River and up the Parsnip and Pack Rivers to McLeod Lake, where he built a post and left James McDougall in charge. Fraser himself returned down Peace River in the autumn, building another post at Rocky Mountain Portage as he came down. The trade of New Caledonia was begun, and it proved a most valuable fur area, the beaver which McDougall traded at McLeod Lake being better in quality even than that of Athabaska. But trade was not the prime object. During the winter McDougall had gone overland from McLeod Lake to Stuart Lake, and in May 1806 Fraser and Stuart went up from Rocky Mountain House, built fresh canoes at McLeod Lake and then went by river where McDougall had gone on foot, to Stuart Lake. Their route took them by Parsnip River to the Fraser and then up Nechako River—a round-about route. Food was scarce, for the salmon were not running, and after building a post on Stuart Lake Fraser dispersed his party, to rendezvous later and continue down the Fraser River, which he thought was the Columbia. For this, however, provisions

were inadequate and the reunited party wintered on Fraser Lake, where another post was built. Prospects for trade were good, but little could be accomplished because the canoes of goods failed to come up and the natives (Carriers) were sophisticated and already aware of trade-possibilities by reason of second- and third-hand trade from the west coast by means of Indian middlemen. The arrival of two canoes in the spring of 1808 enabled Fraser to establish yet another post, Fort George at the junction of the Fraser and Nechako rivers, and then, with two officers and nineteen men, he set out to reach the ocean.

Fraser had achieved much already. He had set up a series of posts from Rocky Mountain Portage to Fort George, five in all, and had added the rich returns of New Caledonia to the fur trade. But even such a trade would not stand the cost of the journey to Montreal, and access to the Pacific was a necessary corollary. Here Fraser failed. For the river down which he travelled was not the Columbia, as he hoped, but the Fraser—a turbulent torrent as unsuited for the trade as Mackenzie had found it. Fraser's journey was a disappointment to himself and a failure as far as the major purpose was concerned. But it was a glorious failure; and he and his men reached the Pacific as they meant to do—for 'going to the sea by an indirect way was not the object of the undertaking'.

Fraser reached tidal waters on 1st July, and only then realised that he could not be on the Columbia. He and his men had performed an epic feat, travelling a river in which whirlpools twisted their canoes in halves, riding the current down the canyon of the Fraser, carrying over portages so rough that a pair of shoes would not last a day—but threading their way steadily past the barriers to the ocean. 'I scarcely ever saw anything so dreary and dangerous in any country', wrote Fraser. 'Whatever way I turn my eyes, mountains upon mountains whose summits are covered with eternal snow, close the gloomy scene'. Even the arrival at the coast was disappointing, for the Indians proved suspicious and difficult, there were signs of trade drifting down from the Russian posts to the north, and the expedition at this point almost disintegrated until Fraser rallied and reunited it with an 'Oath of mutual assistance' which completely restored courage, good humour, and purpose. In this, as in so much else, Fraser's expedition was a magnificent vindication of his capacity and leadership. But New Caledonia had not provided the route to the Pacific.

At one stage on his journey, Fraser heard from Indians of other white men on the river, whom he took to be 'some of our friends

from the department of Fort des Prairies'. This would be David Thompson, like himself ordered by the assembled partners in 1805 to cross the Rockies and to pursue the 'Columbia Enterprise'. John McDonald of Garth at Fort Augustus on the North Saskatchewan had already had experience of 'Mr. David Thompson, an astronomer who had come to the department, had orders to go on a trip of discovery towards the Rocky Mountains, and across the mountains if he could'. He was apt to muddle his dates, but this would be in 1802-3; and John McDonald was more accurate in his impressions than he was in his chronology, for he remembered that he had decided to build higher up than Fort Augustus in order to trade with the Kootenay Indians—a decision which resulted in the construction of a new Rocky Mountain House. He remembered, too, that when he went up the river during the winter he discovered 'the gap in the mountains not to be exactly as Mr Thompson represented it'. In 1805 McDonald was sent back again to his old post on the Saskatchewan and left Kaministiquia in good heart with his 'fine but turbulent crew'; he pushed south and established a North West house on the South Saskatchewan or Bow River (where he found the Hudson's Bay men under Peter Fidler in competition) and in 1806 he sent Jacques (or Jaco) Finlay from Rocky Mountain House up the North Saskatchewan to find a way, build a post, and prepare canoes for the journey planned by Thompson.

Thompson's own moves towards the mountains had been southwards, towards Bow River, and when Duncan McGillivray moved down to Montreal and took some of the urgency from the North-westers' approach to the mountains Thompson had been sent to Peace River and then to the Muskrat country. There his old school-fellow George Charles was recapturing much of the trade for the Hudson's Bay post at Churchill, and until 1805 Thompson travelled the district which he knew so well, in uncompromising but friendly rivalry with the Hudson's Bay men. Directed back to active exploration, he spent the winter of 1806-7 at Rocky Mountain House preparing quietly for the journey which he had in mind—quietly, for the Hudson's Bay Company also had a post near at hand and their trader J. P. Pruden was watching every move. The Indians, too, had to be circumvented; for the approaches to the mountains were in the hands of the Piegans, who had suffered in their wars with the Snakes because their enemies were armed with guns while their own weapons were mostly lances and bows and arrows, and who therefore clung firmly to the advantage which their own arms now gave them over the Kootenay and other western tribes. They determined to oppose the

western expansion of the trade, and they watched Thompson to prevent him moving towards the mountains, as they had done earlier. It was only when the Piegans were distracted southwards into United States territory that Thompson got away. The preparations by John McDonald of Garth were of little value, for Jacques Finlay's work proved useless; his canoes were cranky and his post was abandoned. But Thompson, by canoe and then by horse, moved up over the mountains to the Kootenay Plain near the headwaters of the Saskatchewan and then 'by the defiles of the Saskatchewan River' over the Height of Land to the headwaters of the Columbia.

There Thompson built log houses and strongly stockaded them; which was just as well, for a party of Piegans visited him and would probably have been troublesome had this Kootenay post not been defensible—they would certainly have alarmed Thompson, who showed little of the 'Northwest Spirit' in his approach to the Indians. Safe for the moment, Thompson nevertheless decided to leave Kootenay House in spring 1807, and he then took everything up to Lake Windermere and over McGillivray's Portage to McGillivray's River (now Kootenay River) down which he travelled to Kootenay Bottoms (in modern Idaho) which he reached in the middle of May 1808. But there was no urgency in Thompson's attempt to reach the Pacific, and at this point he turned back instead of pressing on. Using horses and travelling largely overland because the Kootenay River was swollen and dangerous, he made his way back to rejoin his family and the rest of his party under the command of his clerk Finan McDonald and then, recovering a large canoe which he had hidden on his way up, journeyed down the Saskatchewan at so rapid a rate that he covered a hundred and thirty-two miles in a day. He disembarked his furs (he had only about three hundred pounds) at Rainy River House on 22nd July, 1808, and then once more turned back to the mountains. Overruled by John McDonald and Donald McTavish, he took two kegs of spirits, but since he was determined not to be responsible for introducing spirits west of the mountains he loaded the kegs on a vicious horse and was delighted to see them bashed about till they had leaked away their contents! He sent off Finan McDonald to build in the 'Lake Indian country' (at Kootenay Falls) and himself spent the winter at Kootenay House, which he had abandoned in the spring of 1808 but found still intact on his return in the autumn.

Although he noted the mild weather west of the mountains, and was convinced that the Columbia was the only river on the west which was navigable from the sea to its source, Thompson made no

attempt to travel through the winter 1808-9. He hunted wild horses, estimated the height of the mountains (he had twice failed to get a barometer sent up) and observed the flora and fauna. Once again, in spring 1809 he decided to bring out his furs to the Saskatchewan instead of pushing westwards, and although he was back at the sources of the Columbia by 13th August and then began to work his way down the Kootenay River he was too late to accomplish his purpose—indeed he seems to have given but little serious attention to the major purpose of his journeys through the Rockies, and he certainly felt no great urgency to get to the coast.

Thompson soon abandoned his canoes as he went down Kootenay River in 1809 and continued with horses, which he borrowed from the Salish Indians. It has been pointed out that he was only forty miles by easy water from Kootenay Lake at the time when he abandoned his canoes, and that an easy downstream course would have brought him to the Columbia, by which he might well have reached the coast that year. Instead he went by Pack River to Pend d'Oreille Lake; there he built Kullyspell House and began an active trade. The Kootenay and other western Indians welcomed the chance of getting guns and ammunition and soon became good shots 'which the Peegan Indians their enemies in the next battle severely felt'. But Thompson was deeply perturbed at the hostility of the Piegans, though he had done so much to earn it, and he spent the autumn trying to find an alternative route to the coast, which would avoid the Piegans. He found Pend d'Oreille River impossible, returned to Kullyspell House, went back to Kootenay River to meet the trade goods which were being brought up to him, then came back to build Salish House, where he spent winter 1809-10. He found English woollens accepted in the moist climate of the west as vastly superior to any leather clothing, and he rejoiced to see that the arms he had provided made the Kootenay eager to offer battle to the Blackfeet and able for the first time to beat them. Travelling around in search of birch bark and of trade, he was vastly impressed by the potential wealth of the country, both for grain and for pasture.

A further attempt on the Pend d'Oreille River in the spring of 1810—Thompson mistakenly called it Spokane River—proved useless; it was 'a terrible Cataract, bounded on each side by high Craigs'. He decided he would have to go to the Pacific by way of the Kootenay River after all, despite the Piegans. But instead of setting off on that route he went back over the mountains and was at Fort Augustus on the Saskatchewan on 20th June, 1810. A month later,

on 22nd July, he was at Rainy Lake, taking his family with him and intent to quit the far west.

At Rainy Lake, however, Thompson was met by emissaries from the partners at Kaministiquia. News had reached Montreal that the Americans had not only reached the Pacific coast by an overland route—that had been known for several years—but that the American Fur Company was organised to capture the fur trade of the west. Thompson's failure to open a route from the Saskatchewan prevented the North West Company from offering any effective rivalry, and Fraser had already shown that no satisfactory route lay by way of Peace River and the Fraser. So the Northwesters petitioned the British government and even Lord Liverpool himself as Prime Minister, asking for a naval vessel to be sent forthwith to take possession and establish a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia. There is no record of the exact orders which met Thompson at Rainy Lake in 1810, but he wasted no more time. He was at Rocky Mountain House on 24th September, and set off again (on horseback by night) on 11th October. His canoes, however, were intercepted and driven back downstream by the Piegiens and after a tumultuous flight Thompson decided that the route by Howse Pass (as it came to be called) and the 'defiles of the Saskatchewan River' was too well guarded by the Piegiens and he would have to use a more northern route, by the Athabaska River.

The route north proved exceedingly difficult, and it was the end of November before Thompson got to the Athabaska River. Most of the horses had to be abandoned on 4th December, and on 30th Thompson set off on snow-shoes with dogs hauling the sledges which his men had made, and with the remainder of the horses under load until they were turned loose on 6th January. It was a forbidding road, up past the Athabaska Glacier in the depth of winter, and Thompson's men (twenty-four of them) were sore afraid. He was buoyed up by a spirit of scientific enquiry, though he was determined now that he would quit the country as soon as this journey was over—and on 10th January he had the exhilaration of knowing that he had crossed the Height of Land and had now to descend the west side of the mountains.

Even now progress was slow and difficult, and though Thompson got down to Boat Encampment on 18th January and reached the Columbia on 26th, he was still in no great hurry. He had set himself the month of August 1811 as the date by which he would reach the coast, and when the change of scene and climate on the western slopes so upset his men that they began to desert, he returned to

build a house at Boat Encampment, there to await better weather, recruit strength and spirits, and build canoes for his journey onwards. His party was indeed in no shape to proceed further. The Athabaska Pass over which he had come was clearly known to his guide, Thomas the Iroquois, and to others of his party (though Thompson was with the possible exception of Duncan McGillivray the first white man to pass that way) and he sent men back over the mountains with letters and to bring up goods and provisions during the winter. But even so, by the middle of April, when they had made a canoe, twenty-five feet long, of split cedar planks sewn together with pine-roots since they had no nails and could find no birch, he could get only three men to come any further with him. So Thompson decided that first he would have to go back up the Columbia to the country where he was known and where, in previous years, he had built his Kootenay, Kullyspell and Salish Houses. There he hoped to recruit a few 'free Hunters', trappers who were already in the Rockies as private individuals, most of them Iroquois but some of them half-breeds or white, to strengthen his party.

It was 14th May before Thompson had pushed his canoe back upstream to the source of the Columbia and begun the journey over McGillivray's Portage (Canal Flat) to Kootenay River; then, leaving his canoe, seventy-four miles across country to Salish River, using horses traded from a Kootenay hunting-party. Following the Salish River down, they found Salish House unoccupied and had to build another canoe, in which they embarked on 5th June. Salish River in its spring flood was utterly different from the placid stream which Thompson had known in the autumn of 1809, but Thompson and his men got safely to the 'Long Carrying Place' and were there met by Finan McDonald and a party with horses from Spokane House, come to help with the portage to Columbia River. A short stay at Spokane House (which Finan McDonald had built in that year) and Thompson completed his portage, to arrive on the Columbia at Ilthkoyape Falls (Kettle Falls) on 18th June.

Near Kettle Falls Thompson found it very hard to get any wood suitable for making a canoe. But eventually he found some cedar, badly grown and damaged by fire, with which he made a shift to build a canoe, and on 3rd July he set off for the Ocean. His party now consisted of five French Canadians, two Iroquois guides, and two Senipoil (Sans Poil) interpreters. They found the Columbia deep, swift and dangerous; and Thompson reckoned that the rivers west of the mountains were usually so, sliding smoothly and treacherously into their *dalles* and canyons whereas those of the east gave long and

noisy warning of their falls and rapids. The Indians through whose lands he travelled, branches of the Salish tribe, were poor but friendly. With salmon as their main food they had come to live in large and settled villages, and they lacked the springy step of tent dwellers and hunters.

At the junction of the Shawpatin River (the Snake) and the Columbia he left a note on a pole to say that the North West Company intended to erect a trade post there; for even Thompson in 1811 was actively aware that he was racing Americans for possession of the coast, and of the Columbia as a fur-trade route. But next day he heard Indian rumours of the arrival of a ship at the mouth of the river, and he must have suspected (if he did not already know) that he came too late. He had only a further week to wait. Carrying over the famous Dalles of the Columbia, he found a change in the face of the country as ash, willow, cedar and aspen, began to appear; and a change in the Indians as the friendly and well-mannered mountain people gave way to the better-nourished but impudent people of the coast. So, carrying again over the Cascades of the Columbia, Thompson came on 13th July to Point Vancouver within the reaches which Broughton had already surveyed from the sea, and on 15th to Tongue Point and a 'full view of the Pacific Ocean'.

The journey was over. The Columbia had been run from source to the sea. Together with the Athabaska Pass and the posts which Thompson had established in the mountains it gave the North West Company such a route as it had planned since before Mackenzie came by land from Canada. But Thompson was too late. The waves were too high for his canoe to round Tongue Point, so he carried the canoe over it and there, two miles off, was 'The trading Post of Mr. J. J. Astor of the City of New York', four low log huts in the charge of two former North West clerks, Duncan McDougall and David Stuart.

Though Thompson in his Narrative calls this post 'The far famed Fort Astoria of The United States', this is the consequence of his writing many years after the event. Fort Astoria in July 1811 must have been something of a surprise to him, for it had only been established a few months and was still in a sorry state. The Astorian expedition had arrived by sea from Boston round Cape Horn, had suffered considerably from sickness and the weather, and had settled at Astoria about seven miles from the open sea, when Thompson found them conducting a promising trade since their goods, though poor by Canadian standards, were 'good enough for the beggarly Natives about them'. Yet the Indians under the great chief Concomly were by no means despicable, and Concomly showed great

capacity for keeping the peace and for furthering contacts with the white men, while the Indians showed so much sense of value that they refused to settle down to a standard of trade on account of the poor quality of the American goods.

Thompson may well have been justified in his contempt for the Americans on the coast, and for the party which, under David Stuart, accompanied him when he went back up the river. But the fact that they were ahead of him was of the greatest significance. He later wrote that the fine countries of Montana, round his Kullyspell House, 'by the capitulation of the Blockhead called Lord Ashburton now belong to the United States', and he peppered the Colonial Office with letters on the subject. But the 'blockhead treaty of Lord Ashburton' of 1842 settled the frontier only westward to the summit of the Rockies, and Ashburton had no hand in the further treaty of 1846, which settled the frontier thence to the coast; and if any one person was to blame for the British failure to state an effective claim it was David Thompson himself. He claimed that it was the report of his attempt to cross the Rockies in 1801, when he was driven back by the Piegans, which had stimulated American efforts in the same direction. It is more than doubtful whether the American movement required any such stimulus from Thompson's example, and it is certain that they showed a speed and directness which he lacked. While he took ten years to complete the project on which he had embarked in 1801, the Americans had reached the Pacific, by a more southerly route, in 1806.

The purchase of Louisiana from Napoleon in 1803 was the event which, more than any other, started the United States on its westward march. Much was uncertain about the sale, especially Napoleon's title to hold or to dispose of this land; but the greatest uncertainty was the extent of the lands purchased. No dependable map of Louisiana existed, and while the frontiers to the south and to the east seemed unlikely to cause any dispute, those to the north and west were charged with meaning. In particular, it was not clear whether the French could claim any lands west of the Mississippi, and whether Louisiana could claim to reach the Pacific. This was particularly important since President Jefferson, 'the most acute geo-political' thinker among the citizens of the United States, who both inspired the purchase and then set to work to make the most of his acquisition, was convinced that sooner or later the United States would 'cover the whole northern if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms and by similar laws'.

Jay's Treaty of 1794 had left the southern border of Canada still open to considerable doubts (some of which David Thompson had cleared up), and the clause which guaranteed freedom of access to the 'Upper Country' to the citizens of both countries proved to be the cause of many incidents. The Northwesters and their Canadian rivals alike felt that American aspirations and determination would, despite the Treaty, drive them out from the trade south of the frontier—wherever the line from the Northwest Angle of Lake of the Woods along the 49th parallel to the Mississippi should prove to lie. Some of these traders moved into the Northwest trade; others, more bound to the southern trade, united in the Michilimackinac Company to counteract the discrimination which they had to face when trading to the south, but even so they found that American nationals had great advantages over them.

Under the direction of Jefferson, American policy was purposefully directed towards challenging the Canadians for control of the trade of the interior and of the far west. Even before the Louisiana purchase was concluded, Jefferson was pointing out to Congress that British trade to the Missouri was conducted under many disadvantages, and (on lines which had been anticipated by Alexander Mackenzie) was noting the possibility of uniting the trade to the Missouri with trade to the Pacific, in the belief that there existed a short and easy passage from the headwaters of the Mississippi to the headwaters of the Columbia. The passage would run through Louisiana (and neither Jefferson nor anyone else knew of the extent and difficulty of the Rockies), and the idea of joining Louisiana to the United States was in his mind for at least ten years before the purchase was concluded.

It was not, however, until 1804, when the United States had acquired this ill-defined but vast colony of Louisiana, more than equal in area to all of the existing states, that Jefferson took effective action. He had, indeed, already planned a 'literary' expedition to expand the bounds of American commerce by exploring up the Missouri in order to establish contact with the sea-captains who were trading on the Pacific coast and to vindicate the claims to the mouth of the Columbia and to the Oregon country which the voyage of the *Columbia* had set up. With the passage of Louisiana into American hands the route of such an expedition became American and the problem became more urgent and realistic. The northern boundary of Louisiana would now be a proper, and relevant, subject of enquiry and might well fit in with the desire for knowledge of the west.

The outcome was the deservedly famous Lewis and Clark expe-

dition. It was a well-found and carefully chosen expedition of forty-five men, officered by two trained and intelligent leaders, and instructed to pursue a national objective. They entered Missouri River in May 1804 and had worked their way upstream to the Mandan villages by the last week of October. Here they were in contact with Canadian fur-traders, and three Canadians were recruited as interpreters. For the North West Company itself, and its trader François Antoine Larocque, the Americans preserved strict decorum, telling him that his post was on American territory but that access was open to British nationals; two Hudson's Bay men also came through the post in the winter, but no exchange of views with them seems to have taken place.

When Lewis and Clark set off again in the spring of 1805 they left behind Indians anxious for American trade (except the Sioux with whom they had quarrelled) and they were a smaller and more experienced party of only twenty-two, all in excellent health and spirits 'except Venereal Complaints which is very common amongst the Natives'. The leaders, too, had a great wealth of knowledge of the west which they had conscientiously gleaned and sifted during the winter. Not all of their information proved reliable, however; at the junction of the Marias River (as they named it) and the Missouri the explorers had to rely on their own judgment, and though they rightly decided that the southern stream was the Missouri and followed it up, they would have done better to go up Marias River, which would have led them to Marias Pass and so to Flathead River (the Bitterroot) and Clark's Fork (part of which was the Pend d'Oreille Lake and River which played their part in David Thompson's route to the Columbia). At this point the Americans began to doubt the accuracy of the detail on Arrowsmith's maps which had been derived from Peter Fidler's journeys on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, and in particular they doubted that Fidler could ever have come so far south as 45° , for had he done so he must have observed Marias River, which he had not marked.

Their decision that the southern river was the Missouri was soon confirmed when they reached the Great Falls of that river. But the Falls kept them hard at work from 21st June to 15th July, getting their outfit over an eighteen-miles portage. So far they had brought with them two *pirogues*, one of six oars and one of eight, each with supplementary sails, and six dug-out canoes which they had got at the Mandan villages to replace a keel-boat which they had sent back from there. The dug-outs were unhandy craft, but superior to the *pirogues* as the river climbed towards the mountains; and when the

expedition was committed to the Rockies as the Missouri brought it to the Falls they left the *pirogues* behind, the larger one at the junction with Marias River and the smaller at the Falls themselves. Even so, the portage took a valuable month, it exhausted the men, and it required the construction of trucks and something of a road—all heavy labour which use of the northern fur-traders' birch-bark canoe would have eased. The choice of transport can be ascribed in part to the very nature of this government-sponsored expedition (the British Government and the Royal Navy were to reveal the same leanings towards bulky equipment when they began overland Arctic exploration), but in part it was due to the underlying conviction that the Missouri would provide an easy passage to the Columbia, a broad fine river, free of portages and free of ice, which would lead to within a single day's portage of the Columbia. An iron-frame boat covered with elk-skins proved a failure, and even with two extra dug-outs the party was short of transport and forced to leave much of its supplies *en cache* when it set forth again on 15th July.

Launched once more on the Missouri (at White Bear Island) the Americans allowed their conviction of the need to follow that river to lead them south when they might well have struck west, taking the Continental Divide through either of the neighbouring Cadotte or Lewis and Clark's passes, and so come downstream by the Blackfoot River to Clark Fork River and on to the Columbia. Following the Missouri south, they came by way of the Gate of the Mountains to the Three Forks of the Missouri by the end of the month and there, very tired and footsore, and somewhat bewildered too, they rested for a couple of days hoping to meet some Snake Indians and find out more about the country. Although they had a Snake Indian woman (wife of their interpreter) with them, and she recognised occasional landmarks as they came into the Rockies, they badly needed better and more accurate information of the way which lay ahead. At Three Forks they took the northern river (which they named the Jefferson) as it swung south-west, in the hope that it would give them the easy water-passage on which their expedition was based, and they were disappointed as it turned more and more southwards. Despite the difficulties of getting their canoes upstream they still felt doubts that the whole world 'can furnish an example of a river running to the extent which the Missouri and Jefferson's rivers do through such a mountainous country and at the same time so navigable as they are'. Yet at Red Rock Creek, where the Jefferson (now called the Beaverhead River at this point) forks, they decided that further navigation would be impossible and that therefore

they must find Indians with horses or else leave so much of their provisions that they would be on desperately short commons. So Lewis set off on 9th August to find the Snakes, who were still refusing contact though the Snake woman told them they were near the place where her people habitually crossed the mountains. In three days, on 12th August, Lewis first passed 'the most distant fountain of the waters of the mighty Missouri' and then, crossing the top of the dividing ridge, came to 'a handsome bold running Creek of cold clear water'. There he 'first tasted the water of the great Columbia river'. He had crossed the Lemhi Pass and was on the headwaters of Lemhi River, which runs into Salmon River and so into the Columbia.

Lewis, like Alexander Mackenzie before him, had crossed the Continental Divide. To the north of him David Thompson had done as much, engaged upon the same search. But David Thompson was halted in the mountains. Lewis saw 'immense ranges of high mountains still to the West of us with their tops partially covered with snow', and when he had made contact with a Snake Indian encampment it was only to be told that neither the Lemhi nor the Salmon River provided a route to 'the great lake where the white men lived'. Yet his faith in the route he had followed made him hope that this account was exaggerated. But Lewis soon convinced himself that the account was true; Salmon River was indeed not navigable. So the expedition turned north, up a narrow and difficult canyon to the Bitterroot Valley in search of a more northerly route to the west, which the Nez Perce Indians were reported to use. On 9th September they came to the junction of the Bitterroot (or Flathead) River, down which they had been travelling northwards, and a creek from the westwards up which they hoped to reach the Nez Perce trail. Here, at Travellers' Rest, they were at the point to which they might well have arrived in about five days (as their Indian guide said) from the Gate of the Mountains if they had struck out westwards instead of following the Missouri and then the Jefferson to the south, only to be blocked by Lemhi and Salmon Rivers and forced to work their way northwards again. The mistake—and it would have been strange indeed had they not taken the course which they followed—cost them about six weeks of privation and hard travel.

From Travellers' Rest their guide took them west, up Travellers' Rest Creek (Lolo Creek), through difficult mountain country on a trail made arduous by much fallen timber and which Clark described as a 'most intolerable road on the sides of the Steep Stoney moun-

tains, which might be avoided by keeping up the Creek'. By the time they got down to a village of the Nez Perce Indians and the Clearwater River they were all sick from exhaustion, exposure and poor food, and the diet of dried salmon and camas bread which they got from the Nez Perce brought on gripes, dysentery and distention. The Nez Perce were good and friendly Indians (apart from a tendency to steal) but Lewis and Clark were most thankful when, on 7th October, they had completed five dug-out canoes and were able to take to river travel once more.

The Clearwater was dangerous with riffles, snags and rapids, but in three days it brought them to a large river coming in from the south. This was Snake River, and Clark was on the right track when he guessed it was the Salmon River, which they had earlier found unnavigable, for the Salmon joins the Snake. The Snake also was turbulent, but not impossible; and on 16th October, after running a great rapid, the expedition 'proceeded on Seven miles to the junction of this river and the Columbia which joins from the N.W.' Dogs supplemented the diet for all except Clark, and they pushed on past the Willamette River to enter the canyons and gorges of the Columbia, and to find their first sea-otters in a pool below Celilo Falls on 23rd October. Here, too, they found two well-made and beautiful canoes, traded by the Indians from white men at the coast, and they managed to purchase one of them.

They were approaching the end of their journey. But the Nez Perce Indians, among whom they were, warned them that the Indians at the mouth of the river proposed to kill them, and when the party had run the Dalles of the Columbia, through the dangerous Short Narrows and the Long Narrows (or Lower Dalles), and come to the Cascades of the Columbia, they found the Dalles Indians only too obviously unfriendly, and ready to steal anything possible. Below the Cascades, on 2nd November, they were on a 'smooth gentle Stream of about 2 miles wide, in which the tide has its effect'. The Indians were unattractive in the extreme; already clearly used to trade with white men, they displayed their beads, guns, axes and woollens, and they took knives, pipes, clothes or anything else. 'We became very much displeased with these fellows', noted Clark. But he traded food and took them as guides—in fact they swarmed out from their large and permanent villages and thronged round the Americans—until on 7th November the river widened. From camp that night the Americans rejoiced at the sound of the ocean waves breaking on the rocky shore and at the view of what they thought was the ocean—'This great Pacific Ocean which we have been so

long anxious to see'. Actually they could only see a further widening of the river and they were windbound on the north bank for a day and two nights, soaked by the rising tide and in great danger from the 'monsterous trees' which the river floated past, and for a further four nights they were held before they could send off a party overland to find a more commodious camp-site. At the foot of high cliffs, they were only able to rest on driftwood which floated at every tide. Their canoes were in danger, and everything they had was soaked, for they had eleven days' continuous rain. They were in the gravest danger. The Indians could manage their high-prowed canoes in the threatening waves, but Clark found even an attempt in an unloaded canoe liable to bring the expedition to a disastrous end.

It was 15th November before a lull in the storm gave the expedition a chance to slip from their creek, round a point and come to a safe beach with an Indian village near at hand. There at last they met the 'emence swells from the Main Ocean (imediately in front of us)', and decided to proceed no further by water. Here they could see the river's mouth, from Cape Disappointment to Point Adams, and here they stayed until 7th December, when they moved to the southern shore and began to build Fort Clatsop. There they meant to winter, and there they hoped to be visited by an American ship which would re-equip them—for their clothes and equipment were entirely rotted by constant rain and flood.

There was indeed an American ship, the *Lydia* of Boston, trading off the mouth of the Columbia in 1805. But the explorers got no relief from her, for they missed contact. After a miserable winter at Clatsop, spent in the greatest discomfort, they started on their return journey with no reinforcements, but much wiser. Their winter discussions had clarified their views and had left them with a firm plan. There was no doubt in their minds that they had come to the ocean by the Columbia. But there was equally little doubt that the way they had come would not provide that commercial route for which Jefferson had sent them forth. It was clear, however, that their route could be improved upon, and their winter's discussions left them convinced that though a direct water-connection from Missouri to Columbia must be abandoned and the Rockies must be crossed with pack-horses, yet the route which they had followed would be greatly shortened and simplified by cutting out the long and arduous detour to the south and then north again. They would go direct from the Falls of the Missouri to Traveller's Rest—and on the return journey in 1806 Lewis confirmed the practicability of this route while Clark explored the upper Yellowstone River. Lewis also went up Marias

River, hoping that it might lead American traders to the Upper Saskatchewan and so to the trade-areas of the North West Company. In this he was disappointed, and moreover he got into a fight with a small party of Blackfoot Indians who tried to steal his rifles, and his party shot and killed two of the Indians.

So by the time the expedition reassembled on 12th August, 1806, where the Yellowstone joins the Missouri, they knew that though the Yellowstone was a magnificent and navigable river it afforded at best but a lengthy route to Bitterroot Valley and that the surest way lay (as they had reasoned during the winter at Fort Clatsop) by five or six days' portage from the Falls of the Missouri to Traveller's Rest and the Clearwater. This meant a hundred and forty miles of steep and broken mountain road of which sixty miles were covered with snow even in June; but it was a route which would allow the fur trade to be carried on by way of the Missouri and the Columbia, provided posts were settled *en route* and horses were got from the Indians.

Clark insisted on the fur-trade possibilities. Lewis elaborated them. With emphasis on the wealth of the mountains and of the Missouri country in peltry, he planned that the furs should be taken to the mouth of the Columbia, whence they would reach Canton and the China market ahead of those shipped to London by the British companies (much of whose trade from the Assiniboine and the Red Rivers and from Minnesota would probably also be diverted to this route). As yet, however, the mouth of the Columbia was not clearly American territory. The American captain Robert Gray had indeed sailed the *Columbia* into the river in 1792 and had given the United States some claim. But Vancouver had sent Lieutenant Broughton up the river in the same year, had decided that no subjects of any civilised state had been before him, and had claimed the river, its watershed and the coast, for Great Britain. The claims of Spain also could not be completely overlooked. But Lewis and Clark had, from time to time, left marks to assert American rights, they had been at pains to impress the Indians with American power and purpose, and they were there, west of the mountains, ahead of the Northwesters and still further ahead of the Hudson's Bay men. In these years Simon Fraser was still in New Caledonia; he did not go down the Fraser River to the coast until 1808, two years after the return of Lewis and Clark, while David Thompson did not get away on his prolonged attempt until 1807, when the Blackfeet had moved south to oppose the Americans because of the two Blackfeet whom Lewis had killed on Marias River. Further south, the Northwesters sent François

THE PACIFIC COAST AND THE NORTHWEST



Larocque to the upper waters of the Yellowstone, where he arrived ten months before Clark got there on his return from the coast. But Larocque was badly qualified as an explorer though a competent traveller and trader, and in effect he accomplished little. True, the posts which David Thompson sited at Salish House, Kullyspell House and Spokane House, were well placed, were south of 49° , and drove a good trade. But access to the coast lay in American hands, and by the time Thompson got to the coast in 1811, American claims had been organised by John Jacob Astor.

This German-born merchant had reached America in the year of the outbreak of the War of American Independence, and had immediately ventured into the fur trade and shipped his furs to London. He shipped from Canada as well as from New York, was concerned in several deals with Simon McTavish both as colleague and as rival, and as an American citizen shipped furs to China without regard for the rights of the East India Company or the Navigation Acts, and was used by the North West Company to facilitate its ventures to China. He absorbed the Michilimackinac Company (the loose organisation of those who wanted to continue trading to the south under the terms of Jay's Treaty) by purchase in 1811, and merged it with his own American Fur Company. This was a concern chartered by the legislature of New York, with a capital of over a million dollars, and the combination (which Astor called the Southwest Company) gave him predominant power in the American fur trade, with ability to exploit that great advantage which the Americans had over the Canadians—untrammelled access to the China market.

By the time of the return of Lewis and Clark, Astor was not yet in a predominant position. But he was well on his way to it. The possibilities of the Pacific route appealed to him, and he was the natural person to exploit them. He had the ear of President Jefferson, who promised him every reasonable facility, and he planned for the Pacific trade with a comprehension equal to Jefferson's. Astor's metier, however, was selling furs, not getting them; and the value of the Pacific route would be doubled if it could also be used for the trade of the Prairies, of Athabaska and of New Caledonia. So Astor offered a third share in his project to the North West Company. But the partners, hoping that David Thompson would give them their own (perhaps better) route, that the British government would dispute American claims to the mouth of the Columbia, and that the Hudson's Bay Company would concede a route to the Rockies which would prove better than the Missouri, declined his proposal. Never-

theless Astor, taking his example (and three of his partners) from the North West Company, organised the Pacific Fur Company in 1810. He alone provided the capital, but he preferred the venture to appear as a company and he preferred the other members to be actively interested in the profits, as partners. They included David Stuart, his nephew Robert Stuart, Duncan McDougall, Donald McKenzie, John Clarke, and Alexander McKay who had crossed from Canada with Alexander Mackenzie.

Astor's plans were of course known to the North West Company, for he had outlined his project to them, and since Indian traders and travellers were scarce in the United States he was organising an overland expedition for 1810 in Montreal. The Canadians spurred on David Thompson (in vain) and also petitioned the British government to intervene, for Astor's plans were far-reaching and envisaged one expedition by land up the Missouri, another by sea round the Horn from New York, joint action to take full and formal possession of the Columbia, and then a series of posts 'in every direction up the rivers and along the coast' with ocean transport direct from the coast to China.

As part of these comprehensive plans, the *Tonquin*, freighted by Astor, left New York on the 8th September, 1810, and after an eventful voyage bumped her way, with a loss of eight lives, over the bar of the Columbia in March 1811. Unhandy with their axes, unused to the life, and beset by swarming and thieving Indians who killed three of them, the Astorians probably merited the disdain of David Thompson when he came upon their post in July of that year. Their land party had not yet arrived—did not arrive until May of 1812—but their post gave them and the Pacific Fur Company an *a priori* claim to enjoy the possibilities which Lewis and Clark had revealed.

The Astorians were not the only Americans who were alive to the fur-trade possibilities revealed by Lewis and Clark. Those explorers met the first couple of independent American trappers as they returned down the Missouri, and one of their company turned back to trap the Yellowstone River area with them. As this small party in turn came out with its furs in 1807 it met a big outfit coming up, led by three of Lewis and Clark's men and organised by Manuel Lisa. This party, capable of rivalling Astor, had equal rights with him as American citizens—not that it mattered in the undefined areas of the Rockies and the west coast—and with Lisa they had direction from a practised *bourgeois* of the fur trade such as Astor was not. They trapped the Yellowstone again, they set up a post where Big

Horn River runs into the Yellowstone, and in 1809 they crossed from this Big Horn Post to build at the Three Forks on the Upper Missouri. This was enterprising and shrewd fur trade. But it ran into trouble with the Blackfeet and resulted in massacres, murders and scalplings; and it was concerned only to get furs by the Missouri route, not to use the mountain passes to bring the Pacific within the orbit of the American trade. Here Astor had the larger vision, and his rivals were the North West Company of Montreal.

The party from the *Tonquin* was neither idle nor ineffective; but Astor's venture was ill-fated from the start. Sickness, accidents, discontent and desertion hampered it. But the Astorians sent a party up the Columbia to the Cascades, they looked into Cowlitz River, and they sent a party north as far as $47^{\circ} 20'$; a subsidiary post was set up on the Willamette River, and when David Thompson started on his return journey to Spokane House in 1811 a party of Astorians under David Stuart accompanied him and, ignoring his notice that the region was British, set up a post at Okanagan near the junction of the Snake and Columbia Rivers. During the winter 1811-12 Alexander Ross (the first historian of the region) remained in command at Okanagan while Stuart went north up Okanagan River to Thompson River and began American penetration of the area between the Fraser and the Columbia. Stuart wintered on Thompson River, promised to return and found a post, and in the summer of 1812 came back to set up Kamloops. Here, on the southern boundary of the New Caledonia area which Fraser had opened up, the North West Company took up the challenge and Larocque was sent to build alongside David Stuart, who sent out numerous trapping and trading expeditions to open up this wealthy and disputable area.

While Ross and David Stuart threatened the North West dominance in New Caledonia from their posts at Okanagan and Kamloops, David Thompson's posts were also under fire. Here the vainglorious John Clarke (later to come into the Hudson's Bay Company's service) built for Astor in 1812 against David Thompson's Spokane House and entered on a rivalry with the Northwester James McMillan, while Ross Cox of the Astorians set himself up alongside the North West post at Salish House and François Pillet in American service and Nicholas Montour of the North West Company so allowed their rivalry at Kootenay House to rouse their French blood that they settled their disputes in a duel. Donald McKenzie, in the meantime, had led an American party up the Snake River, and after a brief experiment had decided that the beaver of that area were so scattered that the best trade would be got

by parties of wandering trappers rather than by fixed posts; and in 1812 Robert Stuart (nephew of David) returned from Astoria, with letters for Astor, by a route which was vastly easier than that of Lewis and Clark and which almost achieved Jefferson's ideal.

Basing his journey upon a modification of the southern route which Astor's land expedition of 1810-12 had taken, and which had brought it to grief, Stuart swung south of that party's trail, through South Pass and into the Sweetwater country of the present state of Wyoming, and so reached the Platte River. So he opened the route which, in effect, became the Oregon Trail along which American immigrants moved into the Pacific slope. By contrast with the 'almost insurmountable barriers' of the more northern routes, this was a way by which 'a journey across the continent of N. America, might be performed with a waggon, there being no obstruction in the whole route that any person would dare to call a mountain in addition to its being much the most direct and short one to go from this place (St. Louis) to the mouth of the Columbia river'. President Madison and ex-President Thomas Jefferson were informed of the feat, and it was of the greatest importance in the moves of the Astorians to out-flank and out-pace the Canadians in the race for effective possession and exploitation of these territories.

Astor's plans, however, could not be achieved merely by successful use of the land-route: they hinged upon a combination of the sea and land approaches, and anything his men accomplished by land was undermined by his failure at sea. Lewis and Clark had compiled a list of thirteen captains who had visited the coast, and effective participation, indeed dominance, in this coastal trade was an integral part of Astor's plan. Especially he hoped to make an arrangement with the Russian fur-traders to the north by which he would supply their needs in provisions and in trade-goods and so take from the other American ship-masters this stand-by in their trade which encouraged them to venture round the Horn and to the coast. Short of shipping and of seamen during her struggle with Napoleon, England had little or no maritime trade on the Pacific coast to rival the Americans, but Astor could not afford to neglect the shipping element of the over-all plan. So while Fort Astoria was under construction, and a sloop was made for short coastal trips, the *Tonquin* set off to trade up the coast. Captain John Thorn, however, was an obstinate and irritable man who had frequently quarrelled with the Astorians on the voyage to the Columbia, and it is not surprising that he should soon have got into a dispute with the Indians. At Clayoquot Sound, as he ran up the south-west coast of

Vancouver Island, a large party of Indians came aboard to trade. Disputes led to blows; nevertheless Thorn allowed the Indians aboard a second time and fighting broke out again. In the course of the tumult, somehow, the magazine exploded and the *Tonquin* sank stern first. About a hundred Indians were killed, and there were no European survivors. Attacks such as the *Tonquin* had to face were common features of the American trade on the coast, and the ships' captains both expected and gave harsh treatment; but the complete destruction of the *Tonquin* was unique; it was a heavy blow to Astor, and it left the post at Astoria short of all the goods and provisions which Thorn had kept aboard his ship.

Astor's second ship, the *Beaver*, in 1812 left supplies at Astoria and then went on to trade on the coast and to take a cargo of seal skins from the Russians at Sitka in exchange for goods. She then went to Hawaii and so to Canton—a most successful voyage. But at Canton Captain Sowle heard that the War of 1812 had broken out between the United States and Great Britain. So the *Beaver* remained on the China coast until the end of the war, and the Astorians found themselves without succour in 1813, for in that year Astor's third ship, the *Lark*, capsized off the Sandwich Islands. Forlorn and despondent, the Astorians could see no possible future for their post or their company when they received news of the war with England. That news came overland, and the Northwesters brought it when John George McTavish came to Spokane House and told John Clarke, and Donald McKenzie bore the tidings down from Spokane to Astoria in January 1813. Joseph Larocque and John George McTavish followed later, in April, to confirm the news and to tell the Americans that they had come to the coast (using David Thompson's route) in order to meet an armed ship sent by the North West Company, and to set up a rival post, disputing American claims, on the Columbia.

The North West Company was feeling acutely the cost and scarcity of furs east of the Rockies, was emphasising the need to control the Pacific trade, and was determined to use the War of 1812 to recover from the Americans the initiative which Astor had seized. The Council of the Company had therefore decided at its meeting of 1812 to send its ship the *Isaac Todd* to the Columbia. First the *Isaac Todd* took the Company's furs to London, where the agents asked government for a convoy, letters of marque, and an exclusive charter for the trade to the Pacific coast. They got Bathurst on their side as Colonial Secretary, so that the Russian Ambassador in London was asked to support a proposal to introduce the North-

westers to the Russians on the coast. The *Isaac Todd*, however, did not reach the Columbia till April 1814. She was a slow ship, too heavily armed and in the hands of a bad sailor, and the first to arrive was the frigate *Raccoon* with John MacDonald of Garth on board to represent the North West Company. He had transferred from the *Isaac Todd* to the frigate *Phoebe* at Rio de Janeiro and to the *Raccoon* at Juan Fernandez, and in the *Raccoon* he arrived at Baker Bay in November 1813.

Already the Northwesters from across the Rockies had gathered in force at Astoria, and the post was in their hands before the *Raccoon* arrived. All of the partners of the American firm were assembled from up-country at the post by the end of June 1813, but knowing that the *Isaac Todd* was on her way, and despairing of any relief, the Astorians decided to abandon the post if no help came within a year; and although Astor's agent Hunt came from the Sandwich Islands in the *Albatross* in August, he was unable to affect this decision. In October the Astorians dissolved their partnership, sold all their property and the post to the North West Company, and accepted the promise of their rivals to pay them and their men. By so acting they forestalled the confiscation which they would have met when the *Raccoon* arrived in November and took formal possession of Astoria in the name of the King of Great Britain.

The North West Company had recovered the lead which Astor had won. The question whether the sale of Astoria annulled American claims to sovereignty, or even whether the formal annexation by Captain Black of the *Raccoon* did so, remained open as a subject for much future dispute. But in the meantime the Northwesters had possession of the river and of the trade of the coast, and the Hudson's Bay Company had to face renewed competition with rivals who had thus, at last, fulfilled their 'Columbia Project'.

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CHAPTER XII

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY DURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLUMBIA ENTERPRISE

John Jacob Astor, in his approach to the fur trade of the Pacific Slope, had in mind a maritime approach from Boston round the Horn, supplemented by the American overland route by way of the Missouri and the Columbia. The Northwesters, in taking over Astoria from him, had no such possibilities in mind. For trade on the Pacific coast they could not rely on access through American territory, and they knew the Cape Horn route to be difficult, dangerous, and subject to the sort of delays which the fur trade could not stand. They hoped, still, that a short route to Athabaska Pass and so across the Rockies to the Columbia might be made available to them by way of Hudson Bay.

In 1812 and 1813 this seemed a reasonable hope, for the Hudson's Bay Committee had taken no very active part in the discovery of a route to the Pacific and, to all outward appearances, must be in a timorous and conservative mood, anxious at best to stabilise and preserve a modest trade, and most probably ready to sell their interests and privileges to those who could develop them to better advantage—and who would otherwise dispute and challenge them. This had been the confident hope of the Northwesters when they embarked upon the 'Columbia Enterprise' in 1805 and it was still, though less confidently, their hope in 1813 when they began to organise their trade to Astoria.

But even in 1805, with the union of the North West Company and the XY Company to add to the already overwhelming preponderance of their rivals, the Hudson's Bay Committee had not been easily overawed. At heart they nursed their old conviction that the goods 'either of the Old or the New Canadian Company' were inferior to those with which they supplied their traders, and even during the Napoleonic war they were as careful as ever in securing first quality trade-goods, though this meant increased costs and entailed constant orders to economise in provisions, wages and credit.

Equally deep in the Committee's habitual thought was the conviction that hostile acts against the Canadians must be avoided. The doctrine was that 'The great and first object of our Concerns is an

Increasing Trade to counterbalance the very enormous and increasing Expences of it. We do not expect returns equal to those of our more powerful Opponents but we ought to receive such returns as are adequate to the quantity of goods you are annually supplied with'. This modest, almost pusillanimous, approach tied in with the conviction that it was 'Not the intention or the interest of the Company to create Contentions either with the natives or the Canadians, which may produce the most serious and mischievous consequences'. Yet the more the Company's servants found themselves opposed by the Canadians, the more they were to act with energy and spirit in trading with the Indians.

The Company had little choice in this matter, in any case. For although individual servants of the Company were, from time to time, capable of acting with as much hardihood as any Canadian, the general run of the English and Orkney servants was better at enduring hardships than at inflicting them. They were under contract to trade, not to fight, and even the great challenge to the Charter made by sending the *Eddystone* to Charlton Island could not be rebuffed for this reason. Captain Hanwell took a boarding party from Moose Fort and found the *Eddystone* in Stratton Sound. He told Angus Shaw, the North West partner in command, that he had orders to capture the *Eddystone*. But Shaw defied the Charter and said he would only yield to an order from the King in Council. He had set up his store-house and two or three tents on the island, and a leaden plaque which read 'This island of Charlton, taken possession of by Angus Shaw Esq., 1st day of Sept. 1803 for the benefit of the N. West Company'; he remained in possession because Hanwell's men refused to attack the *Eddystone*, and the *Rupert* had to sail ignominiously back to Moose.

Here the Committee had seen an exception to their general policy of non-resistance. Their warning to their traders that the *Eddystone* was to be expected had carried a reiteration of the normal order against violent conduct but had concluded 'It is not the Circumstance of their trading Inland we in this Instance so much regard . . . but it is our Opponents assuming a Right to send Vessels of any kind into the Bay that is the most material point'. Even with so clear an issue, and with the Committee willing to depart from their normal policy, circumstances triumphed and normal policy achieved the results required. The Committee fully expected that the failure to take the *Eddystone* would lead to a great weakening of the Company's position, that a further ship would be sent to supply the posts in 1805, and that the policy of non-resistance would prove ineffective

in this vital matter. But although the post at Charlton Island was supplemented by a post at the mouth of Moose River itself, established by an overland expedition from Mistassini, the salvation of the Hudson's Bay posts lay in their trading competence and in the loyalty of the Indians with whom they had trafficked for so many years. The Northwesters failed to secure a trade, and in 1807 they quietly withdrew their posts at Charlton Island, Hannah Bay and Hayes Island.

This failure of the Northwesters was in itself a shrewd commentary both upon the real bases of the Hudson's Bay trade (which could stand on its own feet even when the Charter was successfully flouted) and also of the Committee's grasp of those realities.

The episode of the *Eddystone* had occurred in a period in which both the Old and the New North West Companies had been suffering heavy losses and had been discussing terms of amalgamation, with the illness of Simon McTavish and the personal hostility which he aroused in Alexander Mackenzie to hold up any satisfactory agreement. At the same time both concerns were confident of securing a right of transit through the Hudson's Bay territories which would give them reasonable access to the Rockies and the Pacific beyond. The death of Simon McTavish and the amalgamation of the two companies placed these negotiations upon a new footing, and in December 1804 the Hudson's Bay Committee met to consider the position arising from the amalgamation of the Northwesters and to discuss a proposal that Sir Hugh Inglis should act as intermediary.

At this meeting were set out the terms upon which the Hudson's Bay men accepted the challenge of the Northwesters. The sending of the *Eddystone* to Charlton Island had led them to take Counsel's Opinion on the validity of their Charter, and as they met to consider the amalgamation of their rivals they had the disconcerting reports before them. They had gone to the best men and could not delude themselves with the thought that perhaps the opinions might be wrong. They had retained Erskine and Gibbs in January 1804, and Romilly in May; the Northwesters secured the opinion of Attorney General Thurlow and of Solicitor General Wedderburn, and the Hudson's Bay Committee were aware of these opinions also. After a search in the Journals of the House of Commons it became clear that the Parliamentary confirmation of the Charter in 1690 had been granted for seven years only and had not been renewed in 1697. Therefore the validity of the Charter rested only upon the Royal prerogative which stood behind the first grant of 1670. The long,

and successful, history of the Company meant nothing in this context. Counsel's opinion was that 'That which is not valid in the beginning cannot become so by lapse of time'. The lawyers, further, were all of opinion that the grant of a sole right to trade was beyond the power of the Crown, though the right to grant land was accepted. So Thurlow wrote that the Company had no legal power under the Charter to seize interlopers merely for trading within its territories though it might 'enter upon' any who occupied land there. Wedderburn said the Charter contained many extravagant and illegal clauses but he thought that no forfeiture would be possible until after a test case; and Gibbs roundly supported the North West Company. 'The Northwest Company', he said, 'may navigate the Hudson's Bay and carry on their trade as they please, without any fear of legal molestation . . . they may act as if no such Charter existed.'

The Committee had deferred consideration of the North West Company's proposals to secure a right of transit until the question of the Charter, raised by the sending of the *Eddystone*, had been settled. The Northwesters had renewed their proposals, with a threat that they might go their own way, in August 1804, with Duncan McGillivray and James Forsyth meeting the Hudson's Bay Committee on their behalf. They hoped that Mackenzie might be in London to take a hand in the negotiations in December of that year, but he had postponed his visit. Discussions were nevertheless under way and, with the opinions of their lawyers before them, the Committee at their meeting in December accepted the view that it would not be expedient to resort to legal proceedings in consequence of the difficulties revealed by the opinions of their counsel. It was, further, the 'opinion of this Committee that the Company's affairs cannot prosper when in competition with the Canadian traders, who respect neither justice nor equity but commit open acts of violence, unless the Company's Charter should allow them to punish the offenders'. The possible alternative would be to send large numbers of men to the Bay and to retaliate in strength upon the Northwesters; but this would be both costly and dubious, and the Committee resolved that it would be best to agree some 'regulation' with the Canadians, if possible. At the same time they decided to petition the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, to secure that crimes, misdemeanours and civil injuries committed in Hudson Bay might be tried in England. Even so, the chances of stopping the Northwesters' depredations, still more of rivalling them in trade, were remote and it was in a despondent mood that the Committee met Thomas Forsyth, on behalf of the North West Company, on 30th January, 1805.

Forsyth put forward the Northwesters' plan to cross the Rockies and to reach the Pacific. For this they wanted a right of transit from York Fort to Lake Winnipeg. He insisted that they had such rights as British subjects and that they intended to exercise them in any case. But if an arrangement could be made, Forsyth was ready to promise that they would withdraw their posts from Eastmain and Moose and would promise that they would set up no posts on the coast save at York. Here the Hudson's Bay men showed their tenacity and realism. For they protested that they could see no advantage to themselves in the withdrawal of the North West posts from the coast, and little as they hoped for any legal vindication of their claims they were not prepared to accept as the price of a compromise the surrender of posts which they knew were bound to prove unprofitable. The Northwesters had been offering an 'arrangement' of posts in the Moose-Abitibi area for some years (since McGillivray and Thomas had reached an understanding there in 1799), always under the threat that they would go their own way if suitable terms could not be agreed. Now their latest effort to 'go their own way' had indeed revealed to the Hudson's Bay men the weakness of the Charter; but it had also revealed the strength of their trading methods and of their trading connections.

So the Committee came away from the meeting of 30th January, 1805, muttering that they could see no advantage, as a *quid pro quo* for rights to land goods at York and to transport them to Lake Winnipeg, in the withdrawal of the North West posts at Eastmain and Moose. Duncan McGillivray was in London till 25th February, 1805, to help Forsyth with the negotiations; but neither before nor after his departure was much progress made although there seemed no insurmountable reason why the Northwesters should not achieve their ambition. It was a problem of a realistic appraisal of conditions and prices, and in such matters the Hudson's Bay men were neither to be fooled nor bullied.

Proposal and counter-proposal began to flow immediately after the meeting of 30th January, and by the time Duncan McGillivray sailed the negotiations had reached a point at which the Hudson's Bay Committee had insisted that the surrender of the posts near Moose was not an acceptable consideration and they would therefore want compensation for the present and future loss of trade which the North West proposals entailed. They asked how far the constitution of the North West Company made such an arrangement possible, and how far the concern could bind its individual members. Being told that McGillivray and Forsyth were fully accredited, with

power to agree on behalf of the concern and all its members, the Hudson's Bay Committee then replied that they were willing to help in transit towards the Rockies. But such transit was bound to harm the Company's own trade, and they wanted a precise bid and a precise statement of the implications of the proposal to abandon the Bottom of the Bay.

At this stage negotiations hung during the early summer months of 1805. Governor Sir James Winter Lake (the fourth Governor of the Lake dynasty) and Committee-man George Hyde Wollaston nevertheless continued their active analysis of the problem. The Governor, in his crabbed writing, set out the problem as he saw it; the right of transit to the Rockies would certainly undermine the Company's trade and was not to be conceded without an indemnity payable for that reason. This, he thought, was so far-reaching in its implications that it was probable that no solution would be satisfactory unless the Northwesters bought the Company's whole stock in trade and liquidated the whole concern. With so devastating a conclusion squarely faced, he insisted that hurried action must be avoided and the offers must be carefully looked into.

Wollaston, a new-comer to the Committee but a most penetrating and forceful man of business, also kept his own notes and minutes of these transactions. He carried great weight in the Committee, and he ultimately secured his proposals despite the known opposition of the Governor. In May Wollaston arranged that Forsyth should attend a meeting of the Hudson's Bay Committee. Lake was absent and Duncan McGillivray was still in Canada. Forsyth explained that the North West proposal to withdraw from the Moose area meant only that they would abandon Charlton Island, and he also said that although the Northwesters wanted a right of transit only and had no desire to trade by the Bay, yet they would not enter an undertaking not to do so. The Committee replied that the Charlton post was, in any case, on land which belonged to the Company, and further that if they gave a concession for a post at York they would want a sizeable rent, not a mere peppercorn, and would require the security of respectable merchants for the fulfilment of conditions. In reporting this meeting to the absent Governor, Wollaston said he had the impression that their rivals would probably send another ship to Charlton Island, and added that during the meeting Joseph Berens had very adroitly brought the discussion round to a 'Junction of Interests'. This, said Wollaston, is 'a Subject on which we are all much of the same opinion, if we had truly respectable characters to deal with'.

There was in truth little difference between the Governor and the Committee at this stage, and all alike were despondent and anxious to make a good bargain provided they thought it would be kept. Between a 'Junction of Interests' and 'purchase of the whole stock' of the Hudson's Bay Company there was little to choose in view of the preponderance and energy of the united North West Company. But while Lake tersely noted that the matter must now rest, and that he expected the next move to be the seizure of a passage to the Rockies via York, and so an end to the 'specious pretext' of negotiating with the Hudson's Bay Company, Wollaston kept up his negotiations with Forsyth. He met him again on 13th May, and found they had much in common. Forsyth was afraid that Duncan McGillivray, leaving London in dudgeon, would precipitate some hostile action in Canada, and was anxious to keep relations smooth and negotiations open. He explained that the real object of the Northwesters was not to challenge but to acknowledge the validity of the Hudson's Bay Charter, so that by a suitable arrangement they could secure quiet possession of a post for themselves at York and could get the Hudson's Bay Committee to use the Charter to exclude all rivals. He rejected a suggestion that the two companies should partition the trade by districts, and said that Hobart had turned down Alexander Mackenzie's scheme that the Northwesters might pay for use of the chartered rights.

Wollaston then suggested the two ultimate ideas which the Hudson's Bay men had in mind—that the two concerns should unite and engross the whole trade, perhaps with a new charter to cover them; or that the North West Company should purchase the whole trade and assets of the Hudson's Bay Company. Purchase seemed to Forsyth to entail enormous problems of cost, and of the value of the posts to be bought (and the North West Company, fully committed to its own trade, could certainly not have paid anything like a reasonable price for the vast assets involved). But to both of the suggestions Forsyth found the same insuperable objection; they would both involve control by a London Committee. To the Northwesters Montreal and Grand Portage were indisputably the centres of their trade, and their London agents were regarded with great jealousy. They were indeed powerful but they were taken as at best subordinate partners, more often as paid underlings. They were probably right in thinking that a charter, whether a new one to cover a joint concern or the old one purchased by the Northwesters, would involve control from London, and this they could not accept.

At all events, Forsyth's objection on this point was so deep-rooted

that negotiations were broken off, and when the full Committee discussed Wollaston's report of this interview they wondered whether they should call a General Court of the Company. But 'considering that the critical situation of the Company in regard to the validity of the Charter would be too much exposed by publick discussion' they decided to keep the matter still in the hands of the Committee alone. They can have had little hope of a satisfactory conclusion to the negotiations. But when they met Duncan McGillivray again in November 1805 they stuck to their guns. Either they would sell the whole issue (if the Northwesters could afford to buy) or they would make an 'arrangement' only upon terms which they thought sensible and fair. So when Duncan offered 'Our Ultimatum' on behalf of his partners he found his terms shrewdly analysed. He came instructed by his partners to offer £2,000 a year for seven years for the right of transit from York to the interior. They were prepared to withdraw from James Bay and to promise to make no new posts nearer to the sea than their present ones, except at York. This seemed a reasonable offer in itself, and the best expedient to prevent the intervention of others.

But the Hudson's Bay Committee had two important objections to raise. They insisted that any arrangement must bind all the Canadian traders or else it would be valueless. Further, they resolutely refused to countenance any trade to the Bay which was not direct to and from Great Britain. The Committee had resolved that the 'affairs of the Company must be ruined if put in competition with any Company or private adventurers who may be allowed to carry on the Trade in Hudson's Bay not restricted to and from Great Britain'. Forsyth and McGillivray would not submit to any such restriction. In theory, of course, the Navigation Acts should have bound them to use the English entrepot in the same way as they bound the Hudson's Bay Company; and in practice the bulk of their furs came to London. But they also used American shipping to evade the Navigation Acts, and the Hudson's Bay men knew (from the evidence of the fur-merchant Schneider) that a shipment of furs had just gone from Quebec in an American ship direct to Hamburg. They knew, too, of the Northwesters' shipments direct to Canton, and they knew that the purpose of the Canadians' drive for the trade of the Pacific slope was to sell furs in the markets of China.

On this there could be no compromise, and negotiations ended in February 1806. The Northwesters knew what they wanted, and why they wanted it; the Hudson's Bay men knew the limit to which they could go in concession. Governor Lake was absent from the

final meeting, and Wollaston wrote to regret that the Committee had acted against the Governor's known and decided opinion in ending the talks. But they had fully discussed the chances of making an intimate connection with the North West Company and had decided that it would be impossibly difficult to fix which posts should be withdrawn and to secure honest fulfilment of such a condition. It would be equally difficult to keep all other shipping out from the Bay. But the real trouble was that they were convinced that with a transit-concession the Northwesters would shortly annihilate the Hudson's Bay trade, Charter or none. So they thought it better 'not to procrastinate a negotiation which we thought could not be completed and which in the end would be ruining ourselves without a doubt or a remedy'.

Considering the known weakness of their legal position, the fact that they never expected more than a 'Benjamin's portion' of the trade, and that they were unable to evade the Navigation Acts and were thereby particularly handicapped during the war, the Hudson's Bay Committee put a brave face on their affairs. Despite everything they insisted on the need to trade fairly and not to skimp essentials. Secretary Alexander Lean wrote in 1806 to York Fort to complain of a decline in the returns and to warn of the 'narrow mean contracted notion existing somewhere under a false Idea of Economy'. Yet in the same year Lean certified to government that the Company's stock had not stood at above £60 (for a £100 share) for two years; and within the year he certified that the Company's gross profits were £4,158, from which duty on funded property had to be deducted, leaving only £2,947.

By the turn of the century the Committee had begun to be alarmed at rising costs for trade-goods, diminishing returns as North West competition rose, and smaller prices in a war-ridden Europe. 'The Proprietary', they foresaw, 'must suffer exceedingly'—and the annual dividend was dropped from six to four per cent. in 1801. It was kept at that modest but satisfactory level until 1809, when no dividend was paid. But by 1808 the Committee were forced to petition the government for some relief (which was not forthcoming) on the ground that they had not sold a single fur for export since 1806, and had three years' stocks on hand; this was an account of their affairs which they repeated within the Company too, it was not merely an official version to delude the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In fact so sadly embroiled were they that when the Chancellor suggested a memorandum of the reasons why they sought relief from government, the Committee desisted because that would involve calling a

General Court of the Company and explaining the position to the shareholders.

The long succession of dividends had been maintained by frequent raids on the balances accumulated during the prosperous first half of the century. This was an expedient which had been used from time to time before competition with the Northwesters, and war conditions, had combined to make the balance a steadily adverse one. In 1773, and again in 1774 and 1775, the dividend—of ten per cent. in those years—came in part from 'stock'. Thereafter the situation fluctuated—but on the whole the good years more than outweighed the bad; in 1776 'stock' gained £14,181 17s. 1d., it lost £4,783 11s. 4d. in the next year, gained £19,902 10s. 5d. in 1778 and lost £12,758 2s. 3d. in 1779. There was, of course, an element of book-keeping in these balances. Much depended on the chances of the date at which the balance was struck, whether payments for the fur-sales had come in, payments to tradesmen or customs officers had gone out, and whether some major undertaking was in hand. But the practice of maintaining dividend payment even when the balance of the year's trade did not warrant it is clear, as is the fact that taking one year's trade with another the payments were justified.

The capture of York by Lapérouse caused a crisis in the affairs of the Company, and a more serious stocktaking. The dividends of 1779, 1780 and 1781, had all come in part from 'stock', even though they had been reduced to eight per cent., and in 1783 the Company paid no dividend for the first time since Bibye Lake had resumed payments in 1718. At the same time a realistic assessment of the Company's assets was made. Including the damages due from the French nation, an assessed value of the posts and fortifications, and its goods, ships and investments, the Company rated its assets at £326,905 4s. 4d. on 31st July, 1783. The French debt, now quite irrecoverable since there was no organisation or person in France against whom it could be claimed, was then completely written off, and on 30th June, 1784, the Company entered its balance as £109,194 15s. 9d. This figure is so close to the nominal value of the Company's stock (at £103,950) that there must be some suspicion that it was as arbitrary in its own way as the previously swollen figure had been; it would have been interesting to know what figures the Committee had in mind in 1805-6 when they were contemplating sale to the Northwesters. The write-off of the French debt was, at any rate, a healthy re-appraisal of the Company's finances; but it made no difference in the year-to-year balance of profit and

loss. With no dividend there was only an addition of less than £200 to 'stock' in 1784, a loss of over £11,000 in 1785, and when a five per cent. dividend was paid in 1786 almost half of it came from 'stock'.

The practice continued through the years, and for the most part it did little to affect the financial stability of the Company. The three great holdings of the Company, in South Sea Annuities, in Consols and in Bank of England three per cent. reduced annuities, were still intact when the negotiations with Forsyth and McGillivray ended in 1806. But by that time the Company was virtually back where it had been in the seventeenth century, financing each year's trade on credit and paying off short-term loans as the first charge on each sale of furs. When the balance was struck on 30th September, 1806, the Company owed £25,000 to three members of the Committee, William Mainwaring, Thomas Neave and T. B. Raikes, and it owed the Bank of England almost a further £17,000.

The great change between this situation and that of its early years was that the years of prosperity had left the Company's credit good; and the Bank of England was stable and solid in its support of the concern in a way in which no seventeenth-century private banker could have afforded.

It was as well that this should be so, for the Company was in sore need. The South Sea Stock and all the three per cent. holdings were sold (on a poor market) in May 1808, and the Company then lodged its bond with the Bank of England for an overdraft of £50,000. This overdraft of up to £50,000 was a very considerable increase on the previous top limit of £20,000. The Bank's support of the Company at the level of £20,000 had merely been the provision of accommodation in the form of ready money for merchants who easily covered the liability in a normal year's trade. The new commitment to £50,000 was a provision of credit to a concern which could not make ends meet. By December 1808 the Committee were seeking government support in floating a loan of £60,000, but were eventually content to petition for six months' delay in the payment of customs dues, alleging the closing of the continental markets; and by the end of the year they owed the Bank of England £50,000 and had but £101 1s. 0d. in their current account. Even a Reserve Fund of some £28,000 which was started from the sale of stocks was really based upon credit. As in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the Committee-men themselves found the ready cash to meet the emergency. But when the furs had been sold in February 1809 they reluctantly resolved that no dividend could be

paid 'although the Affairs of the Company at their Factories and Settlements in Hudson's Bay continue to prosper'.

That the Committee should refer to the prosperity of their posts when passing up their dividends in 1809 may perhaps seem odd in view of the success of the Northwesters. The fur returns, however, confirm such an assertion. In terms of 'Made-beaver' all the posts had produced 64,711 skins in 1804, had risen to 68,990 in 1805, to 74,933 in 1806 and had topped 81,000 in 1807. These might be slight by comparison with the North West Company's returns; in 1800, for example, the Hudson's Bay Company imported £38,463 of furs, at Customs House valuation. The Canadians imported £231,394 worth, and to Canada went goods to a total value of £460,155 as against a mere £38,000 worth to Hudson's Bay. All of the Canadian exports and imports were not on behalf of the North West Company, and the trade of both companies fluctuated considerably from year to year, but in most years during the period of the 'Columbia Enterprise' the Northwesters brought out about three times the value of the Hudson's Bay furs—£48,000 as against £15,000 in 1814, £29,000 as against £8,000 in 1816 for example. At times they ran almost level, as when the Hudson's Bay furs rated £29,000 and the Northwesters' £30,000 in 1812; and at times they ranged enormously, as when the Northwesters brought home £59,000 worth and the Hudson's Bay Company only £8,700 in 1809. Of the total of £231,394 from Canada in 1800 £144,300 was on behalf of the North West Company, and this was not widely divergent from the general average in relation to the quantity brought by the Hudson's Bay Company.

The predominance of their rivals is quite indisputable, but the Hudson's Bay trade was nevertheless flourishing and even increasing. The Committee would have been well content with their share of trade if the sales had been good. But although the sales of 1801 produced the large sum of £59,000 this was an exceptional year in which the foreshadowed Peace of Amiens was expected to open the markets of Europe. As the Company had pointed out as far back as 1764, not much more than half of the beaver imported from Canada was worked up in England. For the rest, the markets of Europe were essential, and when war had broken out again in 1804 the markets of Europe were closed to the Company's furs and the financial crisis of 1809 was almost inevitable.

Yet the Company's traders were by now of such a quality that the posts and trade were exceedingly well served. This had, in fact, been the case since the early eighteenth century. Idleness and sottishness

jealousy and pigheadedness, can certainly be found. But the long and often-renewed contracts of service not only spoke of the equable relations between Committee and traders but they also built up within the Company a weight of knowledge and a tradition of service which were alike invaluable. They gave the Company, too, an increasing number of half-breed children for whom the forests and rivers were their home, the Indians their friends and blood-relations, the fur trade their natural way of life, and the Hudson's Bay Company their hereditary employer and patron; many of them, too, had the advantage of an English education. As early as the Company's first establishment of inland posts on the Saskatchewan, at Cumberland and Hudson House, the Northwesters had fully realised the great value of the steady and reliable servants whom the Company employed, and the passing years had left their merits clearly recognised.

The common servants, however, were more variable than the traders. Even the sturdy Orkneymen were given to caballing, and were at times undisciplined; the Committee wrote to their recruiting agent at Stromness to say they wanted no smith or armourer by the name of Goudie—the obstinacy and intractability of this family were proverbial. It was the general opinion that the Orkneymen had no stomach for fighting, too. The number of men required steadily rose as posts increased, and the depots from which the smaller posts inland drew their supplies also needed larger establishments. Whereas James Isham had only thirty-one men at York in 1760 and Churchill had forty-eight in 1762, Churchill was up to sixty-six in 1766, York and Severn to fifty-five. In 1770 Albany had fifty-two men (and this was an increase on previous years); in 1792 that post and its dependencies was brought up to a hundred and thirty, while Moose got sixty and York and its dependencies two hundred and ten. Such increases meant that the Company had to employ a special agent at Stromness, and to pay him a commission on each man recruited. Even so it was increasingly difficult to get satisfactory men. Although occasionally a life-long resident in the Bay appears, living there for forty years or more, for most of the men the time of the renewal of their contract was the time when they held the whip-hand. The Committee demanded two years' notice instead of one from servants who wished to retire, and gave the general rule of contract as £10 a year for a labourer's first contract, £12 a year for his second. The men were bound with an oath (to obey commands, to defend the property of the Company and to abstain from private trade), were liable to all calls in emergency and were regulated in

their hours by the ringing of a bell in the factories. They liked to go off on journeys with Indians to escape from such routine, but in general they were not affable as the Canadians were, nor did they try very hard to make themselves agreeable to the Indians.

The crux of the matter lay in the fact that though the officers' and landsmen's wages were fixed, 'the seamens salary rises and falls according as 'tis peace or war'. So the Orkneymen struck for an initial wage of £15 a year in 1777, they almost all refused to renew their contracts in 1797, and they then 'took on them the superior Command' and refused to go inland from York. The Committee tried to meet the difficulty by setting up a system of incentive-payments for those who made inland voyages, and later, in 1793, worked out a complete system of 'Trip-money' by which the men's wages were increased in proportion as they travelled set distances which were based on Philip Turnor's surveys. But the immediate answer had to be an extra large recruitment, and the *King George* took to the Bay (so the traders alleged) an assortment of boys from twelve to fourteen years old, engaged at men's wages but quite useless. The Canadians at the inland posts were beginning to laugh at the Company's servants, not because they were slow to take offence but because they could not fire a gun.

Trafalgar Year, 1805, was, as might be expected, an exceedingly difficult year for the recruitment of the sort of long-shore 'landsman' whom the Company most needed. There was a 'conspiracy' in the Orkneys in that year and the Committee were forced to allow the agent a premium or bounty of from four to eight guineas for each new man who signed on for three years and of up to twelve guineas for any man who could be got to re-engage for a second period of three years, the premium rising in proportion to the length of the re-engagement. This was in addition to his normal commission of a guinea a man. The bounties had perforce to be continued through 1806, but they merely stirred the agent into shipping off useless and decrepit men, and in 1807 the Committee withdrew the bounty for all posts except Churchill.

This was an uneasy background for the negotiations with the Northwesters, and lack of servants must rank second only to lack of markets in disposing the Committee to sell out. The remedy to the trouble appeared to lie in strengthening the authority of the officers and in spurring them to greater efforts. So the men would feel the compulsion. This was an approach which tied in with the approach to the old troubles of private trade and of smuggled liquor. The remedy approved by the Committee for these troubles was to

promise the ships' captains an additional gratuity of a hundred pounds for every round voyage completed within a year in which there was no suspicion that their ship had carried either smuggled furs or illicit spirits. For the trade in general the remedy adopted (in 1806) was to allow the factors one per cent. on the profits of each consignment of trade-goods sent to them. The former practice had been to allow this percentage simply on the quantity of furs which each trader sent home. This had been quite simple as far as accountancy was concerned, but it had meant that the traders concentrated on getting a quantity of furs, often regardless of the price which they had to pay or of the extent to which they were competing with other Hudson's Bay posts. It was alleged that the old system made the traders both needy and selfish. In 1806, nevertheless, the old system was maintained for the inland traders, but the Chief Factors were transferred to the new system of a percentage on profits. The next step was a promise of rewards for furs caught by the men in their leisure hours—but this was a resolution which does not appear to have been carried into effect: perhaps thoughts of the earlier troubles over private trade and private trapping haunted the Committee, although in general they seem to have had but little memory of the early history of the Company, and to have consulted their documents but seldom.

The proposals to modify conditions and rewards for service in 1806 emanated, as did so much in this period, from George Hyde Wollaston. The son of a learned divine, the brother of a Professor of Mathematics, he brought to the Company's affairs a clear analytical mind and a capacity for persuasive exposition which were bound to leave their mark although he had not the large capital resources and deep confidence in the future of the Company which led men like William Mainwaring or Sir Thomas Neave to lend large sums in the Company's extremity. He had fairly faced the issues involved in the negotiations with the Northwesters, he was responsible (again with no attempt to probe the past history of the problem) for a proposal that the Company should emulate the Northwesters by making Charlton Island the main depot for its shipping, and in 1808 he was the chief figure in the Company's appeal to government for help.

By that time Wollaston was almost in despair over the prospects of the Company, for he failed to get from the Treasury 'that temporary Assistance which we cannot ask at any other hands' and could see no logical alternative save a temporary withdrawal from the fur trade until conditions should improve and there should be some reasonable prospect of selling the furs brought home. He read

his 'Observations' on the trade of the Company to the Committee in April 1809. Here he proposed a further modification of the salaries system, with the object of spurring on the officers to economy and efficiency by making shares in the profits a more important part of their salaries. But the essential part of Wollaston's 'Observations' stemmed from his conclusion—to which he persuaded the Committee and an *ad hoc* sub-committee—that, so far from sending out more men to prosecute the fur trade with vigour, 'it is a great Object to retain those only who can prosecute to Advantage that Branch of Trade which alone can answer under the present Circumstances'.

The key to this resolution lies in the consideration that while unsaleable furs were piling up in the warehouses, timber was in desperately short supply. The British navy had always been dependent upon the Baltic for masts, spars and much of its deck-timber. The long years of war had brought the Royal dockyards and the Royal forests to a state where even the traditional oak for 'compass timbers' was so scarce that it had to be smuggled out from Europe under the noses of Napoleon's officials, and the straight-run Baltic timbers and deals were scarcer than ever when the Armed Neutrality of the North put the Baltic producers and shippers in alliance with Napoleon. An alternative supply to this vulnerable Baltic produce had always been one of the objects of British expansion into America and Canada and now, at a time when the blockading squadrons which kept the French at home could only be maintained at sea by miracles of dockyard ingenuity, the colonies came into their own. The Americans could (and did) supply good deals and firs. But Canada was within the Empire, as the United States were not, and though the dockyard superintendents swore roundly and condemned load after load of Canadian timber as merely putting a premium on dry-rot, yet these were the years during which the Canadian timber industry was founded and was nursed by the English politicians behind a series of strong customs barriers.

If the timber resources of Canada were in many ways unsatisfactory, those of Hudson Bay were suspect and unknown. Certainly nothing of any value could be expected from the northern posts, York, Severn or Churchill. There timber was so scarce that the maintenance of the posts was a constant trouble; even firewood had to be rafted from considerable distances, and six years' accumulation of timber at York was consumed in building two small outhouses. But Moose and the Bottom of the Bay were better supplied and could, on occasions, supply the needs of the other posts.

Wollaston, in 1809, tried to turn the Company into a serious

development of the timber trade, with the object of taking advantage of the bounties and tariffs which were then offered. Timbers and deals were 'those Articles which meet a ready Sale, for home consumption' of which he spoke to the Committee, and he went far towards gaining his object. The traders were ordered to cut down all branches of the fur trade except beaver. That basic fur, it was held, always commanded a ready price while other skins varied according to season and fashion and the Committee, noting that two members had tame beaver in their parks and that two were to be seen on Exeter Exchange, had even entertained a project for a beaver farm in 1806. In more constructive mood, after crying down the fur trade, they turned in 1809 to engage Alexander Christie to develop their timber trade. He was to work to the southwards of Moose, and in his first year, 1809, he found good stands of timber about twenty miles up Moose River and sent home considerable loads. But much of it was badly chopped and of little use. It met competition from increasing imports of good Baltic timber brought in neutral ships, too, and it sold at only £7 11s. a load (of fifty square feet).

The Committee found no fault with this. The *Eddystone* and the *Moose* were ordered to bring home timber in 1810, and though the Committee were beginning to have some doubts, Christie was ordered to erect a saw-mill in 1811 and some fifteen or twenty extra men were ascribed to the Southern Department for this purpose. A saw-mill was ordered for 1812 and Christie was instructed to settle on Charlton Island, where he was to combine cattle-farming with his timber operations. Though the factors suggested that water power was available, experiments proved futile, and though a steam engine was sent in 1812 no-one was capable of erecting and working it, so that an engineer was sent out for the purpose in 1813, as was a barge to facilitate the loading of the timber.

At this stage, as the Napoleonic wars worked towards their conclusion, the Hudson's Bay timber project dropped out of sight. But already one of the classical patterns of nineteenth-century ocean-transport had been displayed. Timber was a difficult and bulky commodity to ship, and it neither required a clean ship as corn or sugar did, nor did it foul the holds as hemp or molasses were liable to do. Timber therefore was the ideal return-cargo for an emigrant ship. The connection was fortuitous but happy; neither for the United States nor Canada, still less for Hudson Bay, was there any real cause which connected the passage of emigrants outwards and of timber homewards; but the ships suited both trades.

That emigrants should begin to move to Hudson Bay was due to

a change in the personnel of the Committee. Towards the end of 1809 Wollaston went from the Committee; the timber-trade, the main object of his 'Observations', had indeed been launched but it was making a slow and inept start and a purposeful abandonment of the fur trade, which he had advocated until markets should improve, had by no means been achieved. In his place the Company's affairs were dominated by Andrew Wedderburn (who changed his name to Andrew Wedderburn Colvile in 1814), by Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, and by the sturdy pamphleteering merchant John Halkett. All three were connected by marriage, for Selkirk married one sister of Wedderburn's, and Halkett had married another. Between them they brought a change of policy which meant a determination to persist in the fur trade and to make it once more the main object of the Company's endeavours.

The new policy had behind it a very considerable and successful history of recent expansion and success in 1809, despite the failure of the European market, the recent lack of dividends, and the capital losses. At the Bottom of the Bay the Northwesters, as had been foreseen, withdrew from their posts near Moose in 1807, and from those between Rupert and Moose in 1808, and so the Company in its turn was able to withdraw its post from Nemiskau. The Company's troubles in that area were, however, by no means over. In the interior the Northwesters were as active as ever; it was only their maritime effort which was withdrawn.

The methods which had long characterised the Northwesters' trade, and which had risen to a furore during the struggle with the XY Company, still predominated after the union of those two companies. 'Could I have considered myself as a private man, divested of any other employment or duty than that of an independent man, then I would not do what I have done, but being a clerk in the Northwest Company, bound to forward their interest in every respect to the utmost of my power, I could not, in consequence, think it consistent with my duty or their interest to make them lose a pack or two by ill-treating these Indians for the sake of a man who never gained them one farthing in his life, and whom we could not revive.' So wrote James McKenzie to excuse himself from maintaining justice and avenging the murder of one of his colleagues. It was merely one example of a general disregard of law and order, and the Hudson's Bay Company was not overstating the case when it warned its traders that they were opposed by men who 'proceed upon a systematic plan of violence, to prevent the Indians from trading with us'.

The process of terrorism was clearly illustrated by the events at Eagle Lake in September 1809. There the Northwester Aeneas Macdonell forcibly seized furs from Indians who came to trade at the Hudson's Bay post, and set to work to terrify the Indians and to show them they could hope for no protection from the Hudson's Bay men. He finally descended on the Hudson's Bay post with pistols and with drawn sabre and ran amuck there, severely wounding one or two men and chasing others into the river and into the woods, until John Mowat turned and shot him dead. Mowat was a particularly dour Orkneyman who eventually refused to accept a pardon because he asserted he should not have been condemned! But his was a kind of obstinate courage which was badly needed if the Committee's instructions were to be reconciled; for it was almost impossible to push a trade against the Northwesters (as one side of the instructions ordered) without rebutting violence by violence (as the other side of the instructions forbade). Mowat was seized by the Northwesters, he spent the winter in irons and in the following summer he and William Corrigan, Hudson's Bay postmaster, and James Tate as a witness and accomplice, were taken down to Montreal to stand trial. The Company briefed the best counsel, and the men were offered pardons. But the affair was a warning of the kind of opposition which had to be faced, and of the way in which the Canada Jurisdiction Act of 1803, with its license to any citizen to bring an offender in the Indian country down to Canada for trial, could completely neutralise a post under the pretence of legal formalities.

The affair at Eagle Lake was outstanding only in that it produced a murder, and a trial in Canada. Elsewhere the process of intimidation was repeated with details which varied according to circumstances and personalities. Particularly in the far north, in the territory of York and of Churchill, was the opposition felt. Here the Company's command lay in the hands of William Auld, and the outposts were controlled by James Bird at Edmonton, with Peter Fidler as a roving surveyor and explorer.

William Auld, the Edinburgh surgeon who had engaged to go to Churchill in 1790, had early shown more interest in furs than in surgery. He had gone inland to try to establish a post in 1794, and after his recall to England in 1795 he had returned to the Bay as second in command at Churchill and as an 'Inland Trader'. In that capacity he had shared the attempts to find a way from Churchill to Athabaska; he had gone to Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1799, and then on to set up a post at Green Lake of whose rivalry Joseph Colen complained at York. So when Auld was made Chief at Churchill in 1802

he was already a fully experienced trader, and he had grown up in the tradition of rivalry between York and Churchill, and of Churchill's claim that Athabaska could best be approached via Churchill River, not via the Hayes or Nelson.

While the North West Company (and at that time the XY Company too) was concentrating its efforts upon securing the trade of the Pacific Coast, the Upper Saskatchewan and Peace River country remained of primary importance as intermediary stages in the route to the Pacific and as sources of furs and of the all-important pemmican to supply the brigades of canoes *en route*; and Athabaska remained the most important source of the furs which enabled the Northwesters to finance their projects of expansion.

At Edmonton James Bird ruled from 1804 to 1816 in succession to William Tomison. He had much of the old Chief Trader's ability in organising his posts and transport and in getting a good trade from the Indians, and he had something of Tomison's partisanship for the posts on the Saskatchewan, though not to such an extent as to make it the defect which had appeared in the older man. Whereas David Thompson wrote of Tomison that 'he has not spoken nor acted against the Northward but neither has he done anything to assist us, he just keeps within the law', the Committee thought that 'it looks as if you had determined to set bounds to the trade in general', and Tomison was called upon to explain his contempt for all departments of the trade save that of the posts inland from York. Bird proved himself as sturdy an opponent of the Northwesters as ever Tomison had been, and he was reported to the Committee as being the only man attached to York who was competent to discuss the intricacies of the Standard of Trade. He was reputed to know more about the trade than all the other officers put together, and to be the only man who commanded enough loyalty to secure obedience and to 'move the machine'. Though unprovocative to a point at which he was accused of timidity, he nevertheless was convinced that the post at Edmonton was the centre from which the Hudson's Bay Company must expand towards and across the Rockies, and must prepare expeditions to stake a claim to the trade of Athabaska.

Satisfactory as the returns from Edmonton and its outposts were during James Bird's time, its place in the forefront of expansion marks its real importance, for the Saskatchewan was the accepted route to Athabaska. The Company's approach to Athabaska had always been most unfortunate, what with the personal vendetta between Joseph Colen as Factory Chief at York and Tomison with his passion for Cumberland House and its outposts, Turnor's conviction

that the best route lay through Nelson River and the Burntwood Carrying Place, the exaggeration of this conviction by David Thompson into a passion for continuing by Reindeer Lake and avoiding Ile-à-la-Crosse and Methy Portage, and Churchill's determination that the Churchill River should be proved as navigable and as good an approach as the Nelson. On the whole the Committee favoured control from York, and transport via the Nelson, the Burntwood Carrying Place and Ile-à-la-Crosse, with Cumberland playing an intermediate role (especially in the early stages) by providing pemmican, transport, and reserves of men and goods. Despite his protests and his sarcasm (which the Committee took in very poor part) Joseph Colen was always suspected of blowing cold upon Athabaska. Something of the accusations made by David Thompson lingered on, and when Colen was recalled in 1798 his successor John Ballenden was strongly urged to rival the Canadians in Athabaska, and Peter Fidler was organised in 1802 into an expedition which moved from Cumberland House north to cross Methy Portage and to build Nottingham House, the Company's first post in Athabaska, on the lake itself. Mansfield House in Peace River, to supplement the fish diet of Athabaska with pemmican, was an essential adjunct to Nottingham House. But neither of his posts succeeded, for Fidler was nothing of a warrior; he had maintained 'harmony' with the Northwesters by withdrawing Chesterfield House on Bow River, and both in Athabaska and in Peace River he met the full force of the policy of mixed threats and cajolery which made the Northwesters so hard to resist.

Yet Fidler's post at Nottingham House on Lake Athabaska persisted despite Northwest opposition until 1806, supplied in some sort from Cumberland but making little effective opposition to the great Fort Chipewyan, the emporium of the north-west. His journals there, and the way in which he suffered the Canadian affronts, earned from Auld the taunt of 'mean and spaniel-like behaviour', and the last winter before he withdrew the post in 1806 was a time of sheer terror for Fidler and his small garrison. He was opposed by Samuel Black, a young and particularly irrepressible clerk in the North West service, who had learned the trade in the service of the XY Company and proved a valuable servant of the North West Company after the amalgamation. Determined to deserve a reputation for aggressiveness, and quite without sympathy for the inoffensive Hudson's Bay men, Black swaggered about fully armed and gave the Hudson's Bay men no chance to trade, to hunt, or even to fish for their food. He would come round their post by night with his men,

whooping like Indians or howling like wolves, knocking on the walls of the house and waking them up in panic. Fidler was not the man to withstand such treatment, and Nottingham House was abandoned in 1806—a bad omen for the Hudson's Bay Committee in their negotiations with Duncan McGillivray and Forsyth.

William Auld at Churchill was more intent on approaching Athabaska from Ile-à-la-Crosse than from the traditional Churchill direction of Reindeer Lake, Wollaston Lake or Seal River.¹ The position of Ile-à-la-Crosse should have rendered it equally appropriate as a post *en route* for Athabaska whether that development came from York or from Churchill. But it seemed generally to be accepted as more favourable to Churchill than to York. Auld himself had gone to Ile-à-la-Crosse from Churchill in 1799 and the post there had been established by William Linklater in that year as an outpost from Churchill.

Greatly though York had pressed on with attempts to rival the Northwesters, the obsession of David Thompson with the Reindeer Lake route, of Joseph Colen with the rebuilding of York and with protecting his Home Guards in the Muskrat country, and the constant care for the Saskatchewan shown by William Tomison, had combined to thwart the attempts, so that the Committee in 1794 had accepted Stayner's contention that Churchill offered undoubtedly the best approach. Nothing was to be attempted from York which might conflict with efforts to use the shorter route from Churchill. York, however, was fully committed and David Thompson and Malchom Ross were supported on their expeditions though Colen protested that he would certainly withdraw from Athabaska as soon as Stayner was ready to establish a footing there. Colen did not get credit for it, but his letters and journals show a genuine desire to withdraw—for his heart was in the Muskrat country south from York—and he told his men to help the Churchill expeditions, allowing any who wished to transfer to Churchill for this purpose to do so. The Committee, however, though anxious to get some worthwhile trade to set against the costs of Churchill, were apprehensive that Stayner's enthusiasm for the Churchill River route might well prove over-done. They decided on second thoughts that there was room in Athabaska both for outposts from York and from Churchill. So, having told York to withdraw, and Malchom Ross to work from Churchill, they re-assessed the decline in the returns from York and urged the great potential wealth of Athabaska on Ballenden. The withdrawal of York had been premature, due to the ill-digested

¹ Cf. pp. 173-76, *supra*.

plans of interested advisers, and the rivalry of the two posts reached such a stage that in 1799 Fidler going from Cumberland to Green Lake met Auld who had set out from Churchill for the same purpose.

So when he took over command at Churchill Auld was able to maintain his early enthusiasm for Ile-à-la-Crosse as a step towards Athabaska. In 1805 William Linklater was once more in command there, and again he experienced bitter opposition, with the Canadians telling the Indians that Churchill itself was destroyed, and swarming round him in such numbers that the Indians were afraid to disobey them. Linklater had been 'accompanied' by Colin Robertson and two men on his journey inland from the Otter Carrying Place, and it was clear that the Northwesters regarded Ile-à-la-Crosse as a key-position. In this they saw eye-to-eye with William Auld. He had received the full support of the Committee when he had made a journey to England in 1804, to recover from a fall in the warehouse and also with the purpose of recruiting extra men so that Churchill would not need to abandon her inland posts, which he had been so instrumental in starting. But Churchill was causing the Committee the gravest concern, and Wollaston included its abandonment among his other proposals in 1805; he reckoned that it entailed an annual squandering of about £2,700 and concluded 'was it a private concern, no individual would continue the Churchill establishment on the present plan, it must inevitably give a loss annually'. Auld was therefore fully supported in his determination to maintain the inland posts of Churchill, especially Ile-à-la-Crosse, but the position of Churchill itself, as the post from which the posts should be supplied and controlled, was open to considerable doubt.

The reason for this was sound, and was largely based on the natural defects of Churchill River when set against the improvements which had been wrought in the transport route from York. Thomas Stayner, as Chief Factor at Churchill, had always protested bitterly at the inroads which, he alleged, York made into Churchill's territory and had vowed that Churchill River (English River in its upper reaches) would prove as good a route as the Nelson. The problem was to use boats there instead of canoes, and Stayner certainly gave the impression that this was possible and had been done. He reported that in 1796 he had taken two *bateaux* containing four thousand Made-beaver in trade-goods up his river and that they had outpaced the canoes which accompanied them. This was probably true of the lower reaches of the river, but the canoe would score on Churchill River when it got tumultuous, and the bye-ways had to be

used, a few days' journey inland. Stayner was shortly dismissed for a complete failure to send in any accounts or despatches—a thing which had 'Never occurred before in the Annals of Commercial Transactions'. His bitternesses, enthusiasms and prejudices, show unmistakably through the accounts which he brought himself to write, so probably the Committee lost little by his omission. In any case, his efforts to improve transportation inland from Churchill were negligible compared with what was accomplished at York.

There also the great advantages of boats over canoes were fully realized and a system was worked out for using either boats or canoes according to the condition of the river to be traversed. Since Isbister's early experiments to use boats to get goods inland to Henley House, the Committee had realised the greater cargo-capacity and the greater handiness of boats. They could be made largely of fir, which grew near to the posts, too; and though even to get to Henley the boats had to be helped up over the falls of Albany River, the Committee strongly urged their use, at Albany and elsewhere. Moose was ordered to try to use boats to get to Lake Superior; English elm for keels and for oars was sent to Albany and to Moose; Osnaburgh was pressed to build boats to get the furs out, and complete boats were sent to York. While William Tomison commanded the inland settlements of York his passion for canoes entailed a virtual neglect of boats and of their possibilities, and it was only when he was on leave that George Sutherland (with whom Tomison long sustained a bitter quarrel) launched boats into the Saskatchewan. That was in 1795, and from this successful experiment was developed a remarkable and well-organised routine.

Speed and skill were essential in any northern transport system; and they were available. Already in 1794, before boats were in use at all at York, Colen had been able to report that 'I accomplished one great object last summer. . . . The men made two trips to Cumberland and other Settlements, which they performed with ease'. This was indeed a triumph of skill, endurance and organisation, and it was largely due to the establishment of the Rock Depot in Hill River—in part also to the system of 'Trip-money' payments which gave a twenty-five per cent. increase on wages for a voyage from York to Ile-à-la-Crosse and which divided the journey to Cumberland into three stages each of which earned a gratuity for each man. Rock Depot, or Gordon House, was set up in 1793-4, in Hill River, about a hundred and twenty miles inland from York. Colen said he first set up the post as a depot from which he could provide for his Home Guard Indians during the winter, to prevent loss of

time wasted in coming down to York during the hunting season. But the Depot soon proved to have other uses, for a rocky barrier in the stream at this point was the first serious bar to navigation inland from York. Canoes would need to be carried, boats could go no further. So when York was sharing the general enthusiasm for boat-building the Rock, in its first year, became the terminus depot at which the boats must hand over their freight to lighter craft—indeed one boat of nine tons, burthen proved of so deep a draught that she could not even get to the Rock.

Much of the credit for launching boats on the Saskatchewan is undoubtedly due to George Sutherland. But he mistrusted boats for Hayes River and planned a system in which York Factory would use canoes up to the Rock, the Depot would then man its own canoes up to the head of Trout River while the Factory canoes went back for another load, and the goods would be taken from Trout River up the Saskatchewan to Edmonton in large boats. The advantages would lie in the relay system which would allow two or more journeys to be made, and in the way in which goods could be stored at the Depot so that they could be got inland weeks before the ice had cleared from the river's mouth. Joseph Colen worked out a better plan. Relays of boats, not canoes, would take the goods from York to the Rock. Then canoes would be essential for the next difficult phase of the river, from the Rock to Jack River settlement. From Jack River to Cumberland, boats would again be used. Two or three journeys a year would be possible, and there were hopes of cutting down the canoe-journey to the river between the Rock and Knee Lake, where a Boat Depot was to be set up. By 1798 Colen reckoned he had the system working so that thirty-two men at low wages took up in four craft the freight which had formerly required seventy-two men at high wages (*Boutes* and *Steersmen* were the costly aristocrats of the transport system) with a very considerable saving in wages and provisions each year.

When the lack of food for the journey on David Thompson's Reindeer Lake—Lake Wollaston route to Athabaska is taken into consideration, this system of boat and canoe relays on Hayes River left even the opponents of York little choice in their method of getting from the Bay to Athabaska. Even had the Committee wished, they could not well have persisted in regarding Churchill River, or even Nelson River with its shoals, as the route which they should use. The maintenance of Ile-à-la-Crosse and the establishment of Athabaska were obviously part of their task; and the route lay from York by Hayes River to the Rock, Knee Lake and Playgreen Lake into

Lake Winnipeg; thence by the Saskatchewan to Cumberland House and then, as Peter Fidler had gone in 1799 and again in 1802,¹ south by way of Green Lake to Ile-à-la-Crosse and over Methy Portage to the Clearwater River. It was a long way round, and it contained two highly controversial loops to the south of an apparently shorter alternative. Both were designed to give early access to open water in the spring, and to lead the brigades by way of established posts on rivers where they could be supplied with pemmican on their journey instead of having to hunt and fish their way inland. Independent travel might be essential for an exploring expedition which ought to travel light; but for a brigade, taking in trade-goods and bringing out furs, speed and certainty were essential. Food had to be provided for the journey, and both the loop down to Lake Winnipeg and that to Ile-à-la-Crosse were inescapable. It is an interesting comment that the object of the Northwesters in their negotiations was to secure the right to go by way of York Fort to Lake Winnipeg as the best possible approach to the Upper Saskatchewan and the Rockies.

The detour by way of Ile-à-la-Crosse was irrespective of the rivalry of York and Churchill, and received little adverse comment, for the hard and bitter route by Reindeer Lake had received every consideration. But the rivalry of the two posts was brought out by the detour to Lake Winnipeg, which played into the hands of York, and the history of the post at the mouth of Jack River on Playgreen Lake was more recent and less purposeful than that of Ile-à-la-Crosse. In its original form it had been no more than a counter-stroke to the Canadians, but its potential value soon became apparent as the boat-canoe relay system was organised. Early in 1796 Indians had reported at York Factory that the Canadians had built a post in Jack River near the Playgreen Lake in the main track to Cumberland House and almost in the centre of the territory of the York Home Guard hunters. Joseph Colen immediately sent the veteran Robert Longmoor to build a post in opposition; and from the start the post fell into his system, for Colen reckoned that from Buskacoggan (Playgreen) Lake to the Upper Settlements of the Saskatchewan was about eleven hundred miles and that boats could be used all the way. So Colen sent Nicholas Spence as boat-builder to the new post and decided that it would be a good store-house or depot for goods, where boats from the Upper Settlements could meet the canoes which would have to be used on the bad stretch of water from Rock Depot up to Jack River. In this Colen was extending the use of

¹ Cf. p. 176, *supra*.

canoes further than he had proposed when Knee Lake had seemed to him the appropriate stage and depot, and he was almost alone in his opinion. A Council of his officers, held at the Rock Depot in 1796, decided against his proposal to turn Jack River post into a depot, feeling that Sutherland and the Inlanders were the only people competent to decide on such a matter. Longmoor, too, paid little attention to the post, leaving his subordinate Hallett to build the house while he pushed on to Red Deer River; and when Tomison returned to command inland (with little faith in the boating system) in 1799 he decided that the post was of very little use and ordered Charles Isham and his men to abandon it and join James Bird up the Saskatchewan, while he took the goods for a new post at Trout River, or Deepwater Lake.

This was a most unfortunate result of the vendetta between Tomison and Colen, for Tomison had given some sort of approval to the Jack River post and Colen had sent in a party from York to help establish the house at Trout River. Moreover, the value of the boating system had already been shewn, and two *bateaux*, each of a thirty-foot keel, had already brought the furs from the Upper Settlements some twelve hundred miles to Trout River. Tomison, however, not only had little time to spare for boats; he was also very largely pre-occupied with the affairs of the Saskatchewan and averse from schemes which shortened supplies and men for that area in order to protect the Home Guards of York, secure the food hunts of that post, and challenge the Canadians in the area south of Lake Winnipeg, where Albany seemed to have great advantages over York. On all of these counts the post at Jack River seemed to him dubious, and it was in part as an element in his policy of leaving to Albany the Red River area south of Winnipeg that he ordered the abandonment of Jack River. It went with the abandonment of the post at Swan River and the curtailment of Longmoor's attempt to set up a further post at Red Deer River.

But although Tomison frowned upon the Jack River post, Colen had evolved a master-plan for transportation. In picking Jack River as the site for his inland depot he had chosen the strategic centre for transport from the Bay to the Saskatchewan, and to Athabaska and beyond. Here or hereabouts was to be the meeting-place of the brigades, whether of canoes or of boats, from York Fort, from Montreal and Lower Canada, and from the Upper Settlements. Here, in later years, was to be the site of Norway House, the great administrative centre to which the factors of the Company gathered in Council, and from which they despatched goods, men and orders,

to the whole of the Company's territories. It was more than a shrewd choice by Colen; it shewed a sound appreciation of the essential problems of the routes involved in the Company's trade, and though for the moment Tomison cast his ban on the project, the realities remained and were appreciated. The route was used, though Jack River was not developed into a depot, and stages to reach Lake Winnipeg were marked out, as at Knee Lake and as when the post at Oxford House was established in 1798.

William Auld had shared in the attempts under Stayner to force boats up Churchill River, and he was fully aware of the advantages which boats held over canoes when the rivers allowed their use. The ineptitude of the Company's servants called forth his scathing comments and he pointed the contrast between drifting down the Thames in a wherry and working a canoe up the rivers of the north. But at Churchill the boat could do little. The typical craft of the Hudson's Bay transport system came to be called the York Boat—rightly so, for its value was most fully exploited by York, and in its turn it gave to York undisputed control of the approaches to the 'Upper Settlements'. As yet, until 1804, William Tomison controlled the policy according to which York used this dominance, and used it to emphasise the importance of the Saskatchewan.

Even after his retirement in 1804 Tomison's influence was not yet ended, for he found he could not bear life in England or Scotland and in 1806 the Committee agreed to employ him again. He was to be an Inland Trader from York, given no salary but to get a commission on any trade which he might get. He was to have no jurisdiction or influence, and he was to recruit his own men in the Orkneys for an attempt to establish trade in Athabaska, for which he was given the free choice of approach from Churchill or from York. With William Tomison's background of almost perverse loyalty to the route from York to Cumberland there should have been little doubt which he would choose, but in fact he chose Churchill, and Peter Fidler agreed to join him in again exploring that route.

This arrangement with Tomison was settled at an interview with Governor Sir James Winter Lake and Committee-man George Hyde Wollaston. It was part of Wollaston's efforts to re-assess and re-organise the Company's trade and must be put alongside the policy of developing a timber trade, withdrawing from the fur trade, and bringing the wages and salaries of the trade into direct relation with the profits. The contract with Tomison went even further along this road. In effect it turned over to him whatever trade could be got from Athabaska, to be run by him on a percentage basis with men

recruited by himself and with the Company acting only as supplier of goods and as a selling agent. This was completely alien to the Company's traditions, and to the settled policy which it had always hitherto followed. It was the sort of arrangement which Peter Pangman and other Canadians had from time to time proposed and which the Committee, firmly wedded to the tradition of a complete control of every man and every post, had always refused to contemplate.

Tomison was not alone in being thus countenanced in the role of an independent trader. Something of the kind must have been in mind for Auld, who was sent on a tour of Scotland to recruit his own men for much the same purpose, to maintain the inland settlements of Churchill. But it always proved difficult to get men to sign on for Churchill, whose reputation for inadequate food had spread back to the Orkneys, and Auld faced something of a conspiracy in the Orkneys in 1805. He returned, in any case, to normal command at Churchill, not to an independent position, and the Committee duplicated the arrangement with Tomison by calling back into service the unpredictable Donald MacKay. Not for nothing was he known as 'Mad MacKay'. He had brought so much of his Canadian spirit with him into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company that he had proved quite intractable under the command of Albany, and his very reasonable plans for expanding Albany's trade and posts towards Lake Superior suffered accordingly. Transferring himself to York, and written off by the Committee as useless, he had lived as a 'gentleman at large' there, taking no part in the organised routine of the post, demanding services, servants and privileges, and acting with such ungovernable temper that Chief Factor Ballenden thought he was deranged. At times he would threaten to set fire to his house, would disappear into the marsh for weeks on end, or would parade with his broadsword and threaten to run through the first man who appeared. It was difficult to persuade the ships to bring such a character home in 1799, and not surprising that neither he nor his son (who came home in 1801) could settle to a life in Sutherland.

It was left to Auld on his recruiting drive in Scotland to consult with MacKay both about getting recruits and about the possibility of MacKay returning on the same terms as Tomison, to prosecute inland trade 'with such Men under him as he may engage'. The implications were explained to MacKay, who set to work in an attempt to get men together. But even with two pounds a head as bounty to the agent, recruits could not be got in 1805. So the proposal to farm

out the Athabaska affair to semi-independent traders failed for lack of men. The Committee insisted that MacKay would need at least twelve or fifteen men of his own recruiting under him, and refused to proceed when he could not get them. Though MacKay was indeed re-employed with his son in 1806 (on condition that he should live peaceably with all men!), and Tomison also went out to Churchill, control therefore remained with William Auld, working through the old orthodox channels of control and organisation.

Auld remained in command at Churchill until the summer of 1809, when he returned to England to lay his views before the Committee in the crisis of change and re-organisation which marked that year. His experience had by then convinced him that something in the nature of the semi-independent trader, such as had been in mind in 1805, was probably necessary, and that in any case a complete review of the Company's men and methods was essential if it was to survive, still more to get a footing in Athabaska. He had continued during these years in his attempts to establish the Company's trade in that far region, and he had concluded that until basic policy changed the Canadians were bound to remain masters there.

Auld was equally convinced that the approach to Athabaska from York must be replaced by an approach from Churchill. He had always thought so, but recent events had confirmed his views. After his withdrawal from Lake Athabaska in 1806, Peter Fidler had joined with Tomison to attempt to find a direct route there from Churchill, and in 1807 he was praised for his discoveries in the neighbourhood of Athabaska Lake. So in 1808 Auld was told that York had completely renounced all pretensions to Athabaska in favour of Churchill, Fidler's discovery of a new track from Churchill River was praised (but the Committee had no details), more men were sent to Churchill, and Auld was ordered both to send Fidler back to Athabaska and even to go there himself.

In August 1808, therefore, Auld left his post at Churchill in charge of Thomas Topping and went to spend the winter at the post on Reindeer Lake, where he met strong opposition from the Canadians and discovered to the full (if he needed it) the defects from which the Company suffered. The Hudson's Bay post there—a 'House or rather Kraal'—seemed to him 'The most miserable hovel that imagination can conceive. Surely such abominably disgraceful styes must affect the Natives. Dirty as they are, they must make shocking comparisons to our disadvantage. Such temporary shelter', he wrote, 'infinitely below what an Ourang-Outang would have contented himself with, can only bespeak the glimmering dying lights

of an expiring Commerce, not the residence of Britons, not the Settlements of the Adventurers of England'.

The Committee hoped that Auld and Fidler had made good progress, and sent out instructions for York to provide food from Cumberland, but otherwise to leave Athabaska to be developed from Churchill by the route through Reindeer Lake. They found difficulty in recruiting servants for Athabaska and adjusted their wages so as to give an extra fifty per cent. to men who served there. But Auld came away from his winter at Reindeer Lake convinced that 'nothing short of armed men and these more numerous than the Canadians can bring or will produce an increase of our returns'. He was fully convinced of the importance of Athabaska, and reckoned that the Canadians took twice the furs from Churchill River which the Company got—'Good God! See the Canadians come thousands of miles beyond us to monopolise the most valuable part of your Territories'. He was equally convinced that Churchill was the only proper approach, and it always remained his opinion that 'This factory has not at any time been properly estimated, whether from a want of being properly represented or being disregarded as of inferior consequence to York or Albany'.

Auld came back to London in 1809 to put these views before the Committee, and even to carry his convictions past the Committee. If, as seemed very probable in 1809, the Company should prove too weak and ineffective to protect its servants against the outrages of the Northwesters, then Auld hoped that such protection might be got from government, and he came to London ready prepared with a petition for that purpose.

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CHAPTER XIII

COLIN ROBERTSON AND THE SELKIRK SETTLEMENT

Much of his determination was due to Auld's long experience, to his unwavering conviction of the proper solution to the Athabaska problem, and to his recent bitter experience at Reindeer Lake. But something was due to the influence of Colin Robertson upon him. This glib and attractive son of a Perth weaver had run away to New York and had become an apprentice clerk in the service of the North West Company during the period of their struggle with the XY Company. The amalgamation of the two North West Companies in 1804 had left him, like many other young clerks, with less prospects than he had hoped for. While some were stimulated in these circumstances to 'go far lengths' against the Hudson's Bay posts so as to attract attention and win promotion, Robertson was led to review the whole situation and to determine to throw in his lot with the Hudson's Bay Company. In this, discontent played some part; so perhaps did the feeling that 'The mode you employ in transacting business with the natives of this Country, where your Candour and Generosity so far eclipses that of the Canadian Merchant that every impartial man must regret that you have not that footing in the North which your Conduct together with the natural advantages you possess entitles you to'. But enormous self-confidence and ambition were dominant. Robertson had unquestionable ability, and considerable capacity for self-expression. He was also vain, egoistic and idle. In 1809 his purpose was to persuade the Hudson's Bay Committee that the best hope of success in Athabaska lay in overwhelming the Northwesters by a powerful and sustained attack mounted from Montreal and manned by Canadian *voyageurs*. In 1809, at the age of twenty-six, with no capital, no connections and little previous experience, he proposed that the Hudson's Bay Committee should set him up in Montreal to manage an agency which he urged them to carry on there for this business of recruitment, and for provision of canoes and supplies so that they could emulate the Canadians in their approach from Montreal to Athabaska.

Something of this ambitious plan Robertson put to William Auld during the winter of 1808-9 when Auld was at Reindeer Lake. Robertson had 'shadowed' William Linklater to Ile-à-la-Crosse in

1805, and he had probably spent the intervening years in the North West parties which screened off York and Churchill from the Indians; they had closed in so much that they were within a short distance of Rock Depot, and Auld truly assessed the purpose of such cordons—'these people are employed chiefly to keep us and York Factory people in play, that while we nibble at a sprat they may catch whales unmolested in the north'. Robertson knew the North West Company's side of this business, and Auld refused to give him any countenance as long as he remained in the service of that company. But the Hudson's Bay men had already reconciled themselves to some such semi-independent approach to Athabaska as Robertson had in mind when they had offered their terms to William Tomison and to Donald MacKay, and they had never raised any objection in principle to the recruitment of either officers or men from Canada or even from the North West Company itself. So in 1809 Robertson, with Auld's encouragement, came out from the north-west to Grand Portage and there ended his connection with the North-West partners, who wished him well and gave him a good testimonial to his zeal and fidelity.

It was typical of the man that, with such grandiose yet shrewd schemes in his head, he had to borrow twenty pounds from Auld to pay his passage to England. There, sponsored by Auld, he presented his observations on the trade to the Committee in January 1810. He concluded that Athabaska was the key to the North West position; they made a profit of £20,000 a year from the trade of Athabaska alone, and a further £10,000 from English River (Churchill River) and Lesser Slave Lake. The Company's recent ineffective attempts to challenge this position were laughably weak and could only produce the succession of repeated indignities which had in fact resulted when they pitted four canoes against thirty, ten Orkneymen against two hundred Canadians. Athabaska therefore should be firmly established by a combined effort in which York and Churchill sank their jealousies and rivalries, Churchill took complete command by virtue of its natural advantages, and a strong force of Canadians, commanded by men who understood them, provided the effective strength of the move. He proposed Donald McKenzie as commander of the expedition—another disgruntled Northwester clerk—and he hoped that he and Henry McKenzie, brother of Donald, might be trusted with the Montreal agency which would be required.

The emphasis on Athabaska was not new, except in the vigour and conviction with which it was put forward, and the emphasis on Churchill was a point round which much argument had turned, and

which Robertson alleged he stressed out of loyalty to Auld. The project of an agency in Canada had been previously discussed and rejected on grounds of cost. But although Robertson added little that was new he put the three aspects of the problem together, and he brought a colourful personality and a vigorous and persuasive mind to urge the Committee to a firm decision.

The Committee, however, were in no mood to listen to such proposals. Wollaston had just persuaded them into their attempt to set themselves up in the timber trade, and to let the fur trade ride until the markets improved; and the Company's finances were at their lowest ebb. A week before Robertson presented his plan, the Committee spent the whole day in a gloomy survey of the Company's affairs. But on the same day as Robertson's proposals came forward Andrew Wedderburn (later Colvile), offered himself for election to the Committee. He had only just completed the purchase of the requisite amount of stock, and as soon as the formalities of his election were complete he shewed the Committee that he had come among them with coherent and purposeful ideas in his mind.

Wollaston's proposals entailed the withdrawal of the Company from active participation in the fur trade. Henceforth it was merely to outfit the traders, who were to be responsible and were to bear the brunt of the competition. An interim decision to carry this into effect had been taken, but the proposal was still under discussion when Wedderburn joined the Committee. He secured its rejection, and the perpetuation of the Company as an active trading concern. 'Unless we mean to lay the foundation of a certain Bankruptcy at the end of a few years, we mean to retain permanent possession of the trade. It must be kept under an effectual control, and must therefore continue to be managed by servants immediately in the pay of the Company and co-operating in a systematic plan of management in all parts of their territories.'

Wedderburn brought, with this vigorous and logical approach to the Company, a life's successful experience as senior partner in a firm of West Indian sugar-brokers, Messrs. Graham, Simpson and Wedderburn, who had sold their rum to the Company for many years. But he had almost no knowledge of the fur trade as such, and depended for this dogmatic and important declaration of policy on Auld and Robertson, both of whom insisted that Wollaston's plan would be disastrous. As so often happened at this time of tremendous decisions, reliance was placed upon an analysis of abstract considerations rather than upon the previous history of the Company, to which scant attention was paid.

But though Wedderburn relied upon Auld and Robertson to defeat the withdrawal from the trade which Wollaston advocated, he did not follow them in their advocacy of a full-scale attack upon the trade of Athabaska, based upon recruitment of Canadians through an agency in Montreal. His experience, and his convictions, were that thoughtful management, sound accountancy, and economy, would put the Company's trade on its feet again provided that moderation ruled so that no extravagant ventures were started and no provocation were offered to the Northwesters until the Company stood upon a more secure footing. So Robertson's plan was assessed on its merits and was put on one side. 'The enterprize, if ably concerted and vigorously executed, will be a severe blow to the North West Company—which perhaps may serve the purpose of a servant who leaves them in disgust. It does not follow that it will bring any corresponding degree of advantage to the Hudson's Bay Company.' By refraining from action in Athabaska the Committee hoped that the Northwesters might be led to leave the Hudson's Bay men unmolested on the Saskatchewan. They were in any case convinced by Wedderburn that 'in the present state of the Company's finances it would be madness', and that they would be more likely to succeed in Athabaska when the 'home territory' of the Company was fully occupied by numerous and powerful posts manned by active men whose interests were bound up with those of the Company.

There was something more in Wedderburn's mind than simply to defeat Wollaston's policy of withdrawal on the one hand, or Robertson and Auld's policy of expansion on the other. He speedily dominated the Committee, and within a couple of months of his first appearance among them, in the spring of 1810, he had them accepting his plan for the management of the trade within the Bay. This came to be known as the 'Retrenching System', and a meticulous scrutiny of accounts and paring down of extravagance was indeed at the heart of it. But it was constructive too. Though Wollaston's plan to make the traders independent had been rejected, the idea which he had started in 1806 was continued. To give to the Company's servants something of the independence combined with corporate loyalty which the North West Company enjoyed (a point on which Robertson was emphatic) the Committee in 1809 had cancelled the previous arrangements, made in 1806, by which the Chiefs got one per cent. on the produce of each consignment. Instead, to make them 'participate in the Success of the Trade by making their remuneration arise from their exertions', they had given them a fixed premium on the skins shipped by their factories—a shilling on each

prime beaver, eightpence on each otter skin, and twopence on each marten, with one-eighth of this sum on each skin traded at their inland posts. In 1810, under Wedderburn's influence, the salaries scheme was again revised with the same purpose. Half of the profits of the trade were set aside, to be known as the 'Share of the Profits' which should be divided up between the traders. The posts were divided into two Departments, Northern and Southern. The Northern Department was to consist of York, Churchill, Saskatchewan and Winnipeg, while Albany, Moose, Eastmain and their outposts formed the Southern Department. The Superintendent of each Department was to get a third of the Share of Profits and the Factors in charge of the trading houses were to divide the remaining one-third between them. William Auld was appointed to the Northern Department and Thomas Thomas to the Southern, and until the new arrangement could get into working order they were both given a salary of £150 a year and guaranteed at least £250 a year as their part of the Share of Profits. The Chief Factors in charge of the major posts were similarly guaranteed a salary of £100 and at least £50 from profits, and the Traders in command of the small posts were guaranteed a salary of £50 and at least £20 from the profits.

As part of the organisation into Departments it was decided that the Winnipeg and Saskatchewan factories must supply pemmican and dried meat to the other posts, Eastmain was ordered to keep up a white whale fishery and to start again on a search for the ever-elusive lead-mine, while Peter Fidler was appointed a Surveyor at a salary of £100 a year and was told he might also be given command of a trade post and allowed to earn a Share of the Profits.

This was an all-embracing revision of the Company's trade and practices and, since it came from such a complete newcomer to the trade as Wedderburn, there was ample basis for Auld and Robertson to emphasise the 'local ignorance' which lay behind it. But the Committee under the new system began to shew a marked difference in their attitude to servants, taking them into their confidence, asking and respecting their opinions on many important points, both of policy and of personnel, and leaving most of the detailed arrangements to them. The Committee, for example, were anxious (as ever) to encourage the development of agriculture and to diminish the indents for European provisions. Cows and bulls were ordered out to York and to Moose and, as with the fur trade, cash incentives were held out to those in command, a premium on the number of cattle at each post and on every acre under grain. The Committee asked their Superintendent's advice about the posts which should

thus be encouraged and when, after hoping great things from John Thomas's 'Turn for agriculture' at Moose they sacked him in 1813, they left it to his namesake Thomas Thomas to appoint a successor. This confidence went with a vigorous demand for efficiency, and even old and important servants, like John Hodgson, Chief Factor of Albany, were sacked for 'want of that activity and vigour which can alone retrieve the hitherto declining trade from your posts'.

This new confidence in the officers developed and broadened as the Retrenching System gathered weight; it was allowed to extend even to the acceptance of the officers' proposals about the terms on which the ordinary servants should be engaged. The Committee were to some extent bemused by the way in which a loss of £19,000 in 1809 and of almost £9,000 in 1810 was replaced by a profit of £57,860 for 1811. This, however, was because the balance for 1811 was drawn up without including the cost of any goods for export, or any costs at all save the small sum of £696 for wages, so as to show a profit in the year. But very substantial retrenchments were really achieved under Wedderburn's system, the costs of exports were reduced from £62,951 in 1807-8 to £28,321 in 1811-12, and 1812 showed a small but genuine profit. By 1813 the Committee were convinced that the 'Old system' was absolutely destroyed and that the new would re-establish the Company's affairs.

The heavy emphasis on active, interested and loyal, servants, was perhaps less than fair to the officers and men who had brought the Company so far, unfair in particular to the Orkneymen whose dogged endurance had made so much possible. Here Colin Robertson's voice was loud, for he had little in common with them and much affinity with the often irresponsible 'enterprise' of the Canadians. Auld, too, was emphatic about the defects of servants, and he found that the officers also had their defects. They had no notion of the cost price of the goods which they traded, and such enterprise as they shewed was a manifestation of their personal characters, not a reflection of a tradition of service.

In fact, Wedderburn's Retrenching System in its first phase lasted only three years before it shewed the necessity for radical revision simply because Auld himself revealed in office the defects of the Hudson's Bay officer which the system was designed to cure. Neither the Committee nor Parliament, to which he had presented a petition, for the expenses of which his Council had subscribed, countenanced his plea for armed men to counter the Northwest bullies. He therefore returned to take up his important and new post

as Superintendent of the Northern Department (based upon York) disappointed but not defeated and ready to appeal from the Committee to 'the justice of our country'. In the meantime, he had discussed the new system with the Committee, and he came to implement it. He was not completely convinced by it in all its aspects, but economy and retrenchment were clear issues, and Auld set to work to economise and to give the Committee the sort of balance-sheet which they appeared to desire, and from which a satisfying Share of Profits for the officers would spring. He took his instructions to mean that he was 'to make a large profit on a small scale preferably to much loss on a great one'. In this rather perverse but partly justifiable spirit, he enforced everything which had to do with retrenchment, 'reduced the enormous expenses without attempting to extend or even foster the commerce they possessed', and, it was alleged, drove many of his best hunters into the arms of the Canadians by ill-timed parsimony.

Auld protested against the economies which he was told to enforce. But his deep grievance against the new system sprang from other causes. He was convinced that his men were apathetic because of the 'unnatural and un-Christian forbearance of their employers'; the share-of-trade incentive would therefore make no serious difference as long as the men could not count upon support and encouragement for active measures against the Canadians; they would only achieve mean and frustrating economies as a result of the new system. And Auld was not pacified by Wedderburn's concluding Instruction that 'We expect you will defend like men the Property that is entrusted to you; if any person shall presume to make a forcible attack upon you, you have arms in your hands, and the Law sanctions you to use them for your own defence'. He wanted something similar to the North West Company's bullies—'armed men and these more numerous than the Canadians'.

It might have seemed that Wedderburn's new system would contain an answer to Auld's requirement, and perhaps Auld at one time hoped that this would be so. One of the earliest points which the other members of the Committee had made to Wedderburn was that he should investigate the possibilities of getting recruits for the Company from the western islands of Scotland, since it was thought that these men might have all the good qualities of the Orkney men and in addition might be more enterprising and less bound by a common tradition of service to the Company. He was told to get such men signed on for wages of £18 a year for three years, after which they would be free and would be given a grant of thirty acres

of land at Red River, to encourage them to settle there, with ten more acres for every additional year which they served.

This purpose of widening the basis of recruitment and also of encouraging emigration, and the settlement of an agricultural colony on the Company's lands, was incorporated into Wedderburn's new system. A tract of land in the fertile plain of Red River, south and west of Lake Winnipeg, was to be set aside for this purpose, and there retired servants of the Company were to be helped to settle, whether they were old long-term genuine fur-traders or the new indentured labourers who would serve their three years or more with the primary object of securing their passage to Red River and a grant of land.

There was a considerable movement within the Company itself to support such a step. William Tomison was not the only old servant who found life in England or Scotland intolerable after years by the Bay. The spread of the Company's posts to Lake Winnipeg and the Assiniboine in one direction, and to the Saskatchewan and Peace River in the other, had opened up prospects such as had fired Arthur Dobbs in his opposition to the Company, prospects of agricultural development in a climate which was acceptable to an Englishman or a Scot. The mixed marriages of the Company's servants had tended in the same direction and had produced a considerable demand for settlement at the end of service. Such servants had habitually remitted allowances for the maintenance of their Indian families after they had retired to England, and during the early years of the century they began to shew even stronger family ties. They announced that they were ready to pay for the education of their children, and in 1806 the Committee, foreseeing a 'colony' of very useful servants if the half-breeds could also write and keep accounts, fell in with the notion. The children were to be taught religion, and reading, writing and arithmetic. Ministers of religion proved difficult to engage, owing to the nature of the country, but the Committee hoped to sign up a schoolmaster or so, and in the meantime sent out some books and primers, asked for suggestions, and told the surgeons to fill in their leisure hours by teaching the children. Next year, in 1807, they engaged William Garrioch, an Orkney schoolmaster, to go to York as a 'writer' and to teach the children of servants and also such Indian children as might be anxious to reap 'the benefit of Civilisation'. This change in approach to the Indian marked a reversal of policy, but in itself it was not so important as the care for the servants' families, which plainly entailed support for settlement.

William Garrioch proved quite inadequate as the first school-master at York. But since he was signed on at only £15 a year when the Committee had been prepared to pay £30 with increases according to the number of children taught, perhaps this should cause no surprise. The simple curriculum and instructions are in no way remarkable except in the order that the Bible and the New Testament were not to be used as reading primers; but a sign of the inevitable consequence of the acceptance of family life in Rupert's Land was given when in 1809 the Committee accepted the suggestion that Cumberland would be the best site for a school. Not only was it central, it also enjoyed an abundance of provisions and was well-placed for instruction in useful pursuits.

So much spontaneous desire for a settlement was there that the servants, through the medium of Auld, asked the Committee to set aside an area for colonisation. But attention had for the moment turned from the prairies of the Saskatchewan to the plains of Assiniboia. The Company had expanded into this area as one phase of its rivalry with the Northwesters; and the Red River-Assiniboine trade had brought to a point the competition of Albany and of York. Though transportation from York involved the use of horses, so that both Tomison and Colen were willing to renounce their claims in favour of Albany, the Committee soon realised that in Assiniboia the Company had touched upon an area whose importance lay in its ability to supply provisions, not to consume them. Red River was to be used primarily to supply an abundance of provisions to the little post at Point au Foudre on the Rivière Blanche section of Winnipeg River, where they would be absorbed into the transport system up the Saskatchewan to the Upper Settlements. This was the use which the North West Company also made of Assiniboia, and the pemmican and bear meat from that area were the key to their rapid and well-organised system of canoe-brigades working to the interior.

The concentration of the Hudson's Bay desire for a colony upon this area instead of upon Cumberland therefore entailed that it should, almost inevitably, become involved in the rivalry between the two companies and should be considered by the Northwesters primarily as a move in the fur-trade war. As such, Red River Colony played a vital part in the struggle, and events there went far to produce the ultimate coalition of the two companies in 1821, a coalition which was to dominate the fur trade of Canada and Rupert's Land under the Charter, the title, and the leadership, of the Hudson's Bay Company. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the rich lands

of Red River should be chosen for one of the settlement projects which were common features of war-ridden, over-populated and economically unstable, England. It was almost equally inevitable that the North West Company should regard a settled agricultural population at this focus of their trade as a menace to their organisation and a rival for the food and trade to be got there. But that the project became the storm-centre of the hostility of the two companies was due to the fact that the almost inevitable settlement was undertaken under the leadership of Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk.

Selkirk found a very considerable feeling towards settlement already existent within the Hudson's Bay Committee. Even Wollaston's timber project had been in part accepted 'to provide Home Cargoes for Ships which might have carried out colonists', and the Company had shewn its purpose quite clearly before Selkirk appeared. His own purpose and enthusiasm were even more clear and important. A tour of Scotland at the age of twenty-one, in 1792, had convinced him that emigration was unavoidable as a result of the evictions and changes taking place in Scottish agriculture; and the Irish revolt of 1798 had convinced him that Irish emigration also must be encouraged and organised. He canvassed plans for a settlement in Louisiana, he bought land at the mouth of the Great Salmon River in western New York State and then, under the influence of a reading of Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages*, he embodied in his 'Observations supplementary to a Memorial relative to the Security of Ireland' a suggestion that an Irish colony should be settled on Red River. He proposed that the Hudson's Bay Company's claims to the land should be abolished and the Company compensated, but Lord Hobart as Colonial Secretary, and the Pelham government as a whole, were in 1802 against colonisation *en masse*, and against interference with the Hudson's Bay Company too. So Selkirk turned his attention to Prince Edward Island and to the lands around Sault Ste. Marie. He persuaded and organised about a hundred families from Ross, Argyll and Inverness, to emigrate to Upper Canada instead of to Carolina (whither they were bound) and so formed his colonies at Prince Edward Island and at Baldoon Farm. Both projects ran into trouble, and in 1804 Selkirk went to see them and went on to spend the autumn of that year in Montreal. Here he was well received and appears to have won considerable popularity from the Northwesters, who entertained him often at their Beaver Club.

The Northwesters had long had their eye upon this young enthusiast, with his almost perverse enthusiasms and his 'clear estate

of £15,000 per annum'. They had watched his proposals of 1802 with amused tolerance, regarding them as romantic schemes, too absurd almost to be mentioned, and were convinced that the settlers would soon desert and seek more favourable climates. But they watched him purposefully and acknowledged that 'The romantic scheme of a Nobleman . . . is carrying on with a degree of activity I had no Idea of'. When he was dined and wined at the Beaver Club in Montreal, serious business was also talked, and Selkirk emerged convinced that settlement on Red River, on which he was as firmly bent as ever, needed the co-operation of one or other of the two great fur-companies. His 'Observations on the present state of the Highlands of Scotland' re-stated his conviction of the need for emigration, and when in 1806 he took his seat in the House of Lords his ideas were firmly settled. He knew the Northwesters would almost certainly provoke opposition and, with the Hudson's Bay Company facing its financial difficulties, appealing from the Lords of the Treasury to the Board of Trade and with its shares selling at only £60 for a £100 share, Selkirk decided in 1808 to proceed with his ambition of a Red River Settlement under the aegis of the Hudson's Bay Company.

At this time, in November 1807, Selkirk married Jean Wedderburn Colville, sister of Andrew Wedderburn. The sugar broker had as yet no share in the Hudson's Bay Company, but the two brothers-in-law had many ideas in common and they shared a notion that, the peer for purposes of colonisation and the commoner for purposes of re-organisation and profitable trade, each might make something of the rights and claims from which the Hudson's Bay Committee under Wollaston's lead seemed to be retreating. Selkirk was the first to move. The legal opinions on the Charter were known to him and he was aware that, whatever the position might be with regard to an exclusive right to trade, all legal advice was that the Company's claim to ownership of the land was valid. For his purpose this was enough, and in 1808 he began to buy shares in the Company.

In this manoeuvre Selkirk worked in partnership, not with Wedderburn but with Alexander Mackenzie. The explorer was in 1808 a leading partner in the North West Company, intent as ever upon the development of the trade of the Pacific Coast and persistent in his attempts to secure access to that trade through Hudson Bay and to organise management of it by an exclusive company. The failure of negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Committee in 1806 left him with two approaches open—to buy shares in the Hudson's Bay Company so as ultimately to be able to control the issue from within;

or to seek from government a grant of privileges which would override any claims which the Hudson's Bay Company might have.

Mackenzie, in 1808, was engaged in both of these moves. In March 1808 he asked Castlereagh for a grant of the exclusive trade of the Pacific coast with the right of transit through the Hudson's Bay territories and with exemption from the privileges of the East India Company and of the South Sea Company. After the success achieved by Lewis and Clark he was able to claim that prompt and effective action was necessary if the trade and lands of the Columbia were to be kept from falling into American hands. His petition was read at the Board of Trade in July 1808; and no action was taken. Mackenzie, in the meantime, had begun to buy Hudson's Bay shares in agreement with Selkirk. The agreement was shattered when Mackenzie realised that Selkirk's purpose was to set up a colony on Red River, for he shared to the full the North West aversion from such a project. In the dispute which followed, Selkirk was left in possession of most of the shares which the two had purchased in common, and so with a considerable voice in the affairs of the Company. He attended his first General Court in November 1809. Wollaston was at that time in the lead, but a 'Selkirk faction' was rapidly formed, greatly helped when, within a month, brother-in-law Andrew Wedderburn bought the large stock-holding of Thomas Neave and moved in to take control of the Committee's discussions and plans.

Recruitment of short-term indentured labourers and the undertaking to set aside lands on Red River for them and for retired fur-traders were therefore not merely haphazard elements in Wedderburn's 'New System'. They were of a piece both with normal development within the Company and with the chain of family and personal contacts which had brought Wedderburn into the Company. He was, however, primarily a man of business, not an apostle of emigration, and the initial steps were such as to conform to the needs of the Company, not to satisfy the emigrant. Part of the re-organisation which Wedderburn so quickly put in hand consisted in the organisation of the posts into two great Departments, Northern and Southern; within these Departments were to be Districts, and under them Posts. Two new Districts were created as part of the change, Saskatchewan and Winnipeg. Both were to be in the Northern Department, supplied from the Factory at York and under Command of William Auld; Saskatchewan was to consist of all the posts above Cumberland House, and Winnipeg was to consist of Cumberland House, Red River and the country round Lake Winnipeg. It was one sign

of the Committee's reliance upon the officers at this time that the precise boundary between Winnipeg and Albany was left to them to settle.

Selkirk and his plans were therefore incorporated as not very forceful elements in the Company's own proposals in 1809, and Auld was instructed to make preparations for the colony, as Wedderburn was instructed to recruit the Western Highlanders, as part of an over-all revision of policy. Selkirk later alleged that Auld neglected his Instructions in this, as in so many other respects, and that the Committee therefore took the colonising project from Auld and placed it under the separate control of himself. Auld certainly was sceptical where the colony was concerned. But the transfer of control to Selkirk took place early in 1811, as a result of discussions in 1810, and of proposals which were formulated by February 1811. By that date Auld had been given no time or opportunity to carry out the Instructions with which he returned to the Bay in the summer of 1810. Selkirk's plans to take over direct control of the colonial project may therefore be ascribed, perhaps, to a suspicion that Auld would neglect the colony, but they cannot be attributed to the fact that he had actually neglected it, for he had had no chance to do so.

Mackenzie, as a shareholder in his own right, insisted that Selkirk's proposals must not be carried through merely in the Committee but must go before a General Court of the Company, for the Committee were behind Wedderburn and Selkirk, and Wedderburn was told, in February 1811, to 'request Lord Selkirk to lay before the Committee the Terms on which he will accept a Grant of Land, within the Territories of the Hudson's Bay Company'. But the Northwesters were alert in their opposition. A last-minute effort to buy enough shares to enable them to sway the decision at a General Court failed from lack of time. But they were substantial shareholders, and as such they submitted a Memorandum in which they made their basic point that 'it has been found that Colonisation is at all times unfavourable to the fur trade'. They further protested that the proposals would give too much power to Selkirk, and that the object was to secure to Selkirk and his heirs an immensely valuable estate at the cost of the Company. Pressure was also put upon Selkirk, who was warned that he would incur the bitter hostility of the North West Company and that they were a set of men utterly destitute of all moral principle or the feelings of honour prevalent in civilised society. The proposals nevertheless went forward, Selkirk was granted 116,000 square miles of territory for setting up an agricultural colony, in return for which he was to pay a token price of

ten shillings and was to provide the company with two hundred servants every year. At a resumed meeting on 30th May the North-westers John Inglis, Edward Ellice and Alexander Mackenzie were over-ruled, the legal deed was completed on 12th June, and the colony of Assiniboia was launched in the teeth of North West opposition. The tract granted was 'bounded on the East by the Lake and River Winipeg, on the North by the parallels of Latitude $52\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ as far Westward as little Winnipeg Lake and from thence by the parallel of Latitude 52 to the point at which this parallel intersects the Red River—and on the West by a line to be drawn from the above-mentioned point of Intersection in a direction due South to the Southern Boundary of the Company's Territories.' By the grant Selkirk became the owner of a district five times the size of Scotland, one of the most fertile areas on the North American continent, which contained lands now included in Manitoba, North Dakota and Minnesota.

This arrangement included in its scope the plans for colonisation which had been considered in 1810, and Selkirk agreed to provide land for retired servants, while the Company expressly debarred the settlers from any participation in the fur trade and reserved the right to establish trade posts in the uncultivated areas of Selkirk's grant. The Company also agreed to help the settlers, to provide stores and transportation from York to Assiniboia, and Brandon House was ordered to provide seed corn and seed potatoes, and to organise a supply of horses.

The Company expected that Selkirk would recruit the men whom he promised to supply from the Orkneys, from Caithness, from Glasgow and the Western Isles and, in addition, from Ireland; and although some recruits were designed for the colony rather than for the Company they were all signed on for service in the Company, so as to bring them under such jurisdiction as the Company could confer. The Governor chosen for the Colony was also given a commission by the Company, for the same sort of reason. This was Miles Macdonell, a native of Inverness who as a boy had gone with his father to New York and thence to Carleton Island on the Upper St. Lawrence River as a loyalist refugee. He had served as an officer during the American War, had returned to Scotland to get married, and had then settled in Canada and had served in the Royal Canadian Volunteers at Niagara until his regiment was disbanded in 1802. He was in correspondence with Selkirk in 1809, and in 1810 he came to London to conclude an agreement with him, to act as recruiting agent in Ireland and then to go to Assiniboia as Governor,

while Colin Robertson was employed as recruiting agent for Scotland and the Western Isles, and Roderick McDonald for Glasgow.

Against Macdonell and the other recruiting agents the North-westerns waged ceaseless opposition. They bought control of the *Inverness Journal* and there Simon McGillivray, writing as 'Highlander', poured scorn on Selkirk and the colony, painted the gloomiest pictures of the Atlantic passage, transport from York Fort and life in Assiniboia, and did much to discourage recruitment. In 1810 they had not only tried to buy controlling shares in the Company but had also proposed a division of territories which would give them control of Athabaska, Swan River and the lands north and west of the Saskatchewan. This would give them complete control of the Upper Saskatchewan and the route over the Rockies, beyond which the Hudson's Bay Company was not to go. They would also control Athabaska and much of the two areas of potential settlement, the Saskatchewan and Red River. The Hudson's Bay Committee, however, refused to negotiate except upon the basis of their chartered boundaries and of a right of access to the Pacific slope, so the proposal fell through and the North-westerns double-banked their opposition in the trade and in recruitment by a petition for a charter for themselves, in June 1811. They were convinced that 'Selkirk has got an entire ascendancy in the Committee', and equally convinced that the colony must be treated simply as a move in the fur trade whose 'success would strike at the very existence of our trade'.

So when Selkirk's agents mustered a hundred and twenty-five indentured servants at Stornoway (not the two hundred proposed) and began to get them aboard the *Edward and Ann* (an unattractive and old ship), they met difficulties from the intrigues of the North-westerns, and from their influence with Inspector Reid of the Customs Service and with Captain John Reid, recruiting officer for the army there. By the time the *Edward and Ann* sailed on 26th July, a dangerously late departure which brought her to York on September 24th, the servants were reduced to seventy for Selkirk and thirty-five for the Company. Their winter at Nelson Encampment on the north bank of the river brought them to the verge of mutiny and fulfilled many of the worst expectations of William Auld and the Hudson's Bay men.

Auld had been told to prepare help in food and transport for these recruits, and he was also told that they would be useful in giving to the Company what he had always demanded, a numerous force of sturdy men. The Irish recruits were to be the answer to the North West bullies. Under William Hillier, an army officer who promised

to maintain adequate discipline among them, the Irish and such Canadians as the Company already had in its service were to make good the Company's claim to East Winnipeg, where the Company's chief effort against the Northwesters was to be made. This District was to include Pembina and was to extend to the height of land which divided Red River and Winnipeg from Severn and Albany, while West Winnipeg District was to include Cumberland, Swan River, Fort Dauphin, Brandon House and all the western branch of Red River. The Company's revision of the Winnipeg Districts and the allocation of Hillier and the Irishmen to East Winnipeg were the signs that the Company rejected the Northwest overtures with purpose (they were renewed in 1812) and that such a rejection was bound up with support for Selkirk. Albany was to withdraw any posts to the west of Osnaburgh and was to push southwards towards Lake Superior, so as to divert Canadian attention from Hillier, while Auld as Superintendent was recommended to winter at Cumberland as a 'central situation' from which he could watch the Canadians in the upper part of Churchill River and yet could move into East Winnipeg if Hillier and the Irish should get into trouble—for it was expected that they would lack knowledge of the country and even of boat-management and boat-building.

Except in East Winnipeg the Company hoped to trade quietly by avoiding provocative action. Although forty-five of the new men were proposed for Churchill, Auld was told that the Company was not yet ready for an attempt on Athabaska 'with decisive effect' and at Churchill Auld was to be only on the defensive. But the difficulties of planning in London for events in Hudson Bay were fully revealed by the story of the East Winnipeg District under Hillier and the Irishmen. Peter Fidler was retained in employment for a further year (rather against his wishes) so that he could survey the rivers and lakes to the north of Winnipeg River, and could re-examine Nelson River and report on the extent to which short lengths of road covering several portages might reduce the difficulties of navigation and make the use of boats more feasible for this party. All reasonable forethought was given; but Hillier, like Macdonell, was unable to get inland in 1811 because of his late arrival at York. He wintered with his men at Seal Island, and such a winter was almost inevitably marked by some disciplinary troubles, some disputes with Macdonell, some opposition from Auld (from whom he had to draw supplies and provisions) and some incidents with the old servants of the Company. It was not until June 1812 that Hillier, accompanied by Macdonell and the first party of the settlers, was

able to set off up-river. Then, finding no preparations had been made for him, he diverted his party from Winnipeg River to Red River and there settled for the time being, acting as attorney for the Company and finding the greatest difficulty in preventing his men from trading food from the Indians.

Auld was later held to blame for this inauspicious start to what was primarily a Company, rather than a settlement, project. Hillier and the Irish had finished up as troublesome adjuncts to the settlement whereas they were originally intended to be a disciplined force which would confirm the Company's claims and status in East Winnipeg, after which a similar demonstration of force could be effectively reproduced in West Winnipeg, especially at Cumberland and in Athabaska. But Auld was only interested in Wedderburn's plans in a contemptuous and patronising way which in the end proved intolerable, he had no faith in the Irish and little belief that East Winnipeg was the proper area for their deployment. He attended most carefully to disbursements and almost triumphantly pointed out that the result was a decline in the fur returns of 1812. This he in part attributed to the East Winnipeg venture, which had upset the trade, spoiled the Indians and led to over-much hunting for provisions. The Irish were mutinous despite the hope that Hillier would discipline them to a point at which the chief danger would be lest they should be contaminated by mingling with the old servants of the Company; some of them spoke neither English nor French, and they quarrelled with the Orkneymen and Scots, whose 'gloomy superstition of Calvinism' (as Auld called it) emphasised the gulf separating them from the Irish and their Roman Catholicism.

These defects and difficulties Auld emphasised with the same galling cheerfulness and sarcasm as he employed to underline the drop in the year's trade. Himself, in the meantime, he pressed on with the Churchill River development which lay at the heart of his convictions. He did not go inland to Cumberland but remained at Churchill, getting the retrenchments under way before he went over to York in 1811. The vital outpost at Ile-à-la-Crosse, in the meantime, was under the command of Robert Sutherland, who gave no better a performance there than Peter Fidler had done. In June 1811 Sutherland was forced by the 'most Imperious Necessity' to abandon the post because of 'marauding' by the Northwesters—a series of injuries, outrages and premeditated insults in which he was prevented from access to Indians, his fishing nets were cut to pieces, his stockades were hacked down and his goods were taken and carried away. With the strange mixture of pseudo-legality, personal

friendliness, and timorousness, which characterised so much of the rivalry of the two companies, he made his opponent John Duncan Campbell responsible for the Hudson's Bay buildings and promised to return at no distant period to re-occupy them. Even Auld, experienced in the ways of the Northwesters, thought that they had surpassed themselves at Ile-à-la-Crosse, and he accused Campbell and Black of premeditated murder, though the guns which they discharged did not actually kill or wound anyone. Most probably the intention was only to terrify by noise and bluster, but Samuel Black in particular was going 'far lengths' in opposition to the Hudson's Bay men, as Colin Robertson had said any enterprising young man must do.

Although Ile-à-la-Crosse had been subordinated to Hillier's venture in East Winnipeg in the minds of the Committee, yet the fact that Auld had allowed himself to be so unmistakeably defeated at Ile-à-la-Crosse while Hillier had not even started on East Winnipeg led the Committee to a change of plans. In 1812 Hillier and the Irish were ordered back from Red River to York so that they could then be sent off as a strong force to re-establish Ile-à-la-Crosse. Special packets of letters were sent in March 1812, to Auld and to James Sutherland at Cumberland, and the Committee took a big step forward both in using the route through Montreal and in planning the moves which the special packet authorised. At Montreal, Garden, i.e., Maitland, Garden and Auldjo were engaged as agents to charter a light canoe and crew to go to Cumberland and then down to York while another light canoe, if necessary, was to seek out Hillier and give him his orders. Cumberland was to collect pemmican and was to send down boats and canoes by the Burntwood Carrying Place so as to be ready even before the ships could arrive from England—for the Committee were assured that navigation would be possible by the Burntwood route before Churchill River was open, and hoped that service from York would avoid the necessity to send the ship to Churchill.

Hillier and his Irish were therefore to form a powerful and well-appointed expedition to Ile-à-la-Crosse, there to form a strong post on the upper parts of Churchill River on this side (the east) of Methy Portage. This was to be a separate factory distinct from Churchill. The Committee, while beginning to divert Auld from his attachment to Churchill and the English River route, were telling him that he was 'not to allow a notion of Economy in this respect to be carried so far as to prevent our pushing our Posts into the more inland places, where a good trade may reasonably be expected, in

such force as to insure the respect and consequent attachment of the Indians'.

Little faith though Auld placed in the Irish, he had threatened the Northwesters with most signal vengeance for the unrestrained and savage ferocity of their servants, but he was soon in trouble for not supporting Hillier and not finding him a guide. At Edmonton, too, James Bird shewed little enthusiasm; he was in any case under something of a cloud because he recommended for promotion a man who had murdered an Indian and who was employed by the Northwesters after his dismissal. So although the Committee renewed their instructions for Hillier to create a Methy Factory in 1813, nothing was accomplished. By that time even Selkirk had lost confidence in the Irish, and Hillier's vaunted powers of discipline were coming in for criticism. It was alleged that he was too intimate with the clerks of the North West Company and paid too much attention to their representations—which was another way of saying that he also could be scared off. Auld sent the Irish back to East Winnipeg once more in 1813, and the Committee thought that Hillier had received so little support that in 1814 they accepted his resignation with good grace and added the failure of the Irish venture to the mounting list of the enormities committed by William Auld.

So both Hillier and the general development of events brought attention back from Ile-à-la-Crosse and Athabaska to East Winnipeg and the Red River Settlement. There the new purposefulness which Wedderburn had brought to the Hudson's Bay Committee produced a result which the Committee had not expected. They had hoped that if they refrained from Athabaska they might secure peace in the East and West Winnipeg Districts, which they wanted to develop. But the Northwesters were convinced that Selkirk's colony, and the projected development in East Winnipeg, were direct and serious threats to their trade to Athabaska. In so far as the colony, and the resurrection of the Company as a more active rival in the fur trade, would re-establish the Company's claims and rights, there was reason for the Northwesters to fear these developments. And in so far as the Committee themselves hoped that re-establishment of their trade would put them in a position ultimately to mount a challenge in Athabaska, there was substance in the claim. But there is no evidence that the Hudson's Bay men, at this stage, saw the colony as a unit in the fur-trade rivalry, certainly not as a direct step to Athabaska, or that they planned and ordered accordingly. Simon McGilivray however, the lame nephew of the 'Marquis' Simon McTavish who, with his more active brother William, had inherited much of

his uncle's power within the North West Company, never doubted the purpose of the colony. Athabaska, the 'remote establishment' which meant so much to the North West Company, was under threat. 'By their Grant to Lord Selkirk they are striking at the very root of the Fur trade', wrote Simon, determined that Selkirk must at all costs be forced to abandon his venture.

Too much was at stake for such men to risk a soft misjudgment and easy tolerance, and the fact that the succession of disasters did not prevent the Hudson's Bay traders from trying again seemed ominous. Such experience should have been enough to allow them to assess the costs, as well as the chance of success, and though they were solemnly warned that they could hope for no better from 'further experience of the same kind' their determined rivals were non-plussed when they seemed to ignore their experience and to show an unfaltering, if perhaps inefficient, determination to continue as before. Selkirk in this was at one with the Committee, for he soon decided that unless the Company's trade was restored he would have built his colony upon the sand and, without abandoning his views on colonisation and general improvement, he entered eagerly into the proposals to prosecute the Company's trade more actively. Auld's persistence in his loyalty to Churchill River and Ile-à-la-Crosse lent colour to the same view, that Athabaska was to be developed; and from Edmonton James Bird contributed to the general impression.

Bird had at his disposal on the Saskatchewan another of those adventurous, tough and intelligent, men who came out in the Company's service from time to time. With a better-than-average education (for he later published a *Cree Grammar* and an *Analysis of the Chippeway Dialect*, and became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society) Joseph Howse had come from Cirencester in Gloucestershire to join the Company as a writer in 1795. He had much in common with Joseph Colen, also from Cirencester, a shrewd assessor of the geographical problems and routes of the north-west, and the owner of a library of fourteen hundred books which he left behind at York Fort. Howse had been sent inland, to Carlton House, as early as 1799, and by 1809 he had behind him ten years of experience on the Saskatchewan, mostly at Carlton House. In that year, when the Americans were beginning to exploit the discoveries of Lewis and Clark and when the North West Company was pushing Fraser and David Thompson on towards the Columbia, Howse left Carlton House with one Indian and one European servant and travelled into the Rocky Mountains. He was back to spend the winter 1809-10

at Edmonton with Bird, and though the details of this journey are obscure it is at least certain that he met David Thompson on his return journey, on the North Saskatchewan River, not far from the Kootenay plain. After a winter of preparation Howse set off again, to stake a claim for the Hudson's Bay Company also to share in the trade of the Rockies and the Pacific Slope. His journal and letters, and the reports of James Bird as his superior, are all missing from the Company's archives, and Joseph Colen reported from Cirencester to the Royal Society that he had not been provided with scientific instruments and had not 'laid down his track'. But Howse later summarised his journey and there has never been any serious question about his actual accomplishment. With a party of nine servants and about half-a-dozen Indians he crossed the Rockies by the route which came to be called Howse Pass—by the North Branch of the Saskatchewan and over the pass there, as David Thompson had done before him. He made no attempt to find a route to the coast but followed the Columbia upstream and made his way to Flat Bow (Kootenay) River and so descended to Flathead River and there built a house, not far from David Thompson's Kullyspell post. He travelled with the Flatheads to the head-waters of the Missouri during the winter, returned to his house, and came back out to the Saskatchewan in the summer of 1811 with thirty-six bundles of good furs.

Howse had shown that there was no reason at all why the Hudson's Bay men should be behind-hand in the Rockies, or indeed beyond the Rockies, as long as they could work from well-established posts which could supply them with goods, food and canoes. He had shown, too, that just as the Americans under Lewis and Clark and the Canadians under Thompson could easily involve each other in danger either by ill-treating Indians or by providing them with arms, so a Hudson's Bay expedition could also get involved. Auld alleged that Howse himself supplied the Flatheads with arms. More probably—and this at least was Howse's version—he ran into a war between the Flatheads and the Piegans. In this the arms which David Thompson and his clerk Finan McDonald had supplied to the Flatheads had roused the hostility of the Piegans. Their determination to treat all white men as the allies of the Flatheads led David Thompson to abandon Howse Pass and so ultimately to reach the sea by way of the Athabaska Pass. Howse got safely back with his furs, for he was a man of tact and courage, and at Acton House George Flett worked upon the Piegan chiefs to protect him. But Howse was convinced that the trade was not worth the danger, and

so though he was given the handsome gratuity of £150 to encourage his further exertions when he visited London in 1812, and though James Bird planned a further expedition, Howse's journeys of 1809-10 and 1810-11 remained the only crossings of the Rockies by Hudson's Bay men until the struggle with the Northwesters was over.

But although this project was abandoned, it added to the Northwesters' fears and made them see in the Hudson's Bay Company a concern which was developing on lines similar to their own, going to fetch furs instead of having them brought to the posts, and evolving a system of supply and transportation depots upon which rested the network of the fur posts. Any such evidence merely emphasised the need to force Selkirk to give up his colony. 'It will require some time, and I fear much expense to us as well as to himself, before he is driven to abandon the project,' wrote Simon McGillivray, '*and yet he must be driven to abandon it*'.

The colony, in the meantime, had made such a bad start as must have brought great confidence to the Northwesters. Miles Macdonnell and his men quarrelled persistently with Hillier and the Irish; so much so as to call for William Auld to make a special journey to Red River valley to pacify them. They had made but a slow and reluctant start with agriculture, and even in 1814 were still dependent for their food on hunting and fishing, on buffalo meat and pemmican traded from the Indians, and on provisions hauled in from York Factory. They had been sent inland in four clumsy boats. Their journey was long and exhausting, and it did not end their dependence on transport to the Bay. They induced a pressure on the Committee which led to a review of the whole transport system inland from the Bay, and though much of this merely came back to a reiteration of Joseph Colen's plans for the use of boats wherever possible, for the organisation of a depot at the Rock, of another at Knee Lake or thereabouts and of another near Playgreen Lake, the new plans contained one novel feature of the greatest importance. This was the startling proposal to construct a Winter Road from the settlement to York.

The project was not to stop at the connection of Red River and the coast. The road was to be developed so as to follow up the Saskatchewan to Cumberland also, and the Committee were soon embarked upon discussions of the use of reindeer as draft-animals, were plotting a succession of posts which would act as stages on the journey, fitting the Winter Road into the river system so that the road would also act as a portage for the river, organising the growth

of hay and potatoes, and recruiting Swedes and Norwegians who could clear a track and set up the posts.

The Committee, by 1812, were approaching their problems in a thorough and enterprising manner and were facing squarely the first issue in the development of agriculture in Canada. For the fur-trader and the explorer the birch-bark canoe was an ideal, if fragile, vehicle. It gave him the advantages of the astonishing network of rivers and lakes which alone made initial penetration possible. The substitution of boats for canoes was to some extent a move dictated by the limits of timber-growth as the shores of the Bay were approached; it was also a technical development which placed the Hudson's Bay employee on an equal footing with the French-Canadian. But, more significantly, it made possible the comparatively cheap and easy maintenance of inland posts drawing their supplies from the sea. It marked an important stage in the settlement of the north-west. The Winter Road would carry this process one stage further and would provide that constant and dependable means of intercourse which was essential if the lands of the interior were to be developed by settled agricultural communities, demanding constant imports of bulky commodities which would not be expected at a trade post, and producing bulky surpluses which would not be transportable by the same means as furs. Relays of two-horse sledges, working between posts set three days' journey apart, should be able to make the journey from York to Playgreen Lake in about eighteen days, and the Committee (with emphasis on the fact that such roads were in common use in northern Europe) wrote enthusiastically that the project 'very nearly amounts to bringing the maritime navigation to Lake Winnipeg' and looked forward already to bringing loads of grain out from Red River for export to England.

There was much in this which was out of touch with reality. But it spoke of determination, enthusiasm, and of a new and enterprising spirit. The possibilities were under a critical review as they had never been before; this may be seen from the fact that weather journals now had to be kept through the summer months as well as through the winter. The chartering of a further ship to Selkirk, to take out more settlers in 1812 and to bring back timber from Moose, brought to reality that connection between timber and emigration which had always been accepted in theory, and the sending out of commissions to make the Company's officers able to act as Justices of the Peace indicated its determination to accept that duty of preserving order which must accompany settlement.

Justifiable and necessary though these things might be if the

settlement of the prairies was to be furthered, they could not be expected to appear in that light to the Northwesters. Nor can it be pretended that on analysis the affairs of the colony were not just as clearly linked with fur-trade rivalry in the minds of the Hudson's Bay men as they were in the minds of the Northwesters. William Auld, it is true, saw the close connection and deplored it; the utter ruin of the Company was inevitable if the colony was not completely separated off—a ruin 'as perfect as it will be speedy'. But Auld's resignation was eagerly accepted early in 1814 (again using the express packet system by way of Montreal), and he was severely reproved for neglecting alike Hillier, the colony, and the Company's trade. Few supported his stand against the colony, especially among those in authority. For the Committee the colony had merely revealed the impossibility of ever achieving a *modus vivendi* with their rivals, while for Selkirk the fur trade promised a speedy means of overcoming the Northwesters' opposition to his settlement. In 1813 he was both recruiting widely for the colony and was anticipating the early dissolution of the rival company.

In truth the Hudson's Bay Committee seemed to have turned the corner by 1814. As the Napoleonic wars came to an end the markets of Europe were opened up once more, and the year ending 30th September, 1813, saw fur-sales rise to more than double the total of the previous year and reach almost £85,000. There was reason to modify the full stringency of the Retrenching System. Again in 1814 there were good sales, and prices were high; for the Northwesters were in difficulties and brought but small returns to the market. In the course of the War of 1812 the Americans had captured Detroit and had so upset the North West transport and supply system that the Northwesters secured government intervention to persuade the Hudson's Bay Committee in 1813 to grant them (for one year only and without any claim to permanent establishments) that right to send a ship to the Bay which they had hitherto sought in vain. Even so, they did not appear to have been able to take advantage of the concession, and when they sought its renewal in 1814 the Hudson's Bay Committee were able to allege that the national emergency had then passed and to refuse compliance.

With money once more in hand, the Committee increased the shipments of trade-goods, proposed that Joseph Howse should again be sent across the Rockies with Hillier and the Irish forming a protective screen at Ile-à-la-Crosse, and revealed a most business-like and courageous approach to their problems. First they analysed their trade thoroughly and dispassionately, and then they formulated

new proposals based upon this analysis. This was efficiency of a very high order, for instead of the age-old practice of considering the trade as a whole, each post was analysed and the results were tabulated statistically. From such detailed treatment there emerged the startling conclusion that the posts inland, in direct opposition to the Northwesters, had traded far more efficiently, and had produced a better ratio of returns as against costs, than had the posts by the Bay where opposition was negligible. This, of course, was a conclusion which overlooked many factors which would be brought into a modern analysis of this nature, such as setting off a proportion of the costs of the Bay-side factories and charging it to administration and outfitting on behalf of the inland posts. But it was nevertheless a dynamic conclusion. It was a part of that purposeful use of balance-sheets and data by which Wedderburn was not only planning and directing the Company's policy but was also convincing his fellow-members of the Committee that solvency and even prosperity were theirs for the asking. The conclusions from such an analysis were two-fold—first that opposition from the Northwesters was less to be feared than was lethargy in the Company's servants, and second that the system of salaries and incentives would have to be re-adjusted so as to compensate the outposts for the efforts which they made and the hardships which they endured.

The immediate conclusion, therefore, was that the appeasement of the Northwesters should be replaced by active opposition, even in Athabaska. The years of non-provocation had in any case proved futile. The Northwesters were clearly embarked on a policy in which they were prepared to trade at a loss in any particular district rather than allow the Hudson's Bay men to trade at a profit—'nor can we avoid this Species of Malicious opposition by any partial Concession. It is their system to drive in our frontier settlements wherever they may be. Since we quitted Isle à la Crosse their efforts have been directed against Cumberland House.'

So the Committee in 1814 determined to form a large establishment in Athabaska. This was to be accomplished by a party of Canadians, and the Committee engaged 'a gentleman' to go to Montreal, recruit the Canadians, set them out and organise the whole thrust. Here, in effect, was Colin Robertson's plan, and it is not surprising that he should have been engaged to put it into effect. When his proposals had been put on one side in 1810 he had set himself up as a general merchant in Liverpool, in partnership with his brother Samuel, and later with a certain Thomas Marsh. He can have had very little capital for such an enterprise, and he had little

of the dour probity and attention to detail which would be essential. His merchandising was based upon a hope that he would be able to profit from knowledge of the fur trade and set himself up as general factor to supply that market. But though Selkirk used him to recruit servants for the colony, Robertson's offer to supply 'slops' to the Hudson's Bay Company was turned down, and in March 1814, perhaps at the request of Wedderburn (who in that year changed his name to Colvile by royal licence) he submitted a revised plan for the Athabaska venture. Again the essence was that Canadian *voyageurs* would be necessary, that he should himself act as the Company's agent in Montreal, and that the business must be conducted on something like the North West system, of giving the officers a share in the profits.

The 'Share of Profits' system which Wedderburn had set up in 1810 was as yet only coming to the end of its running-in period; the officers were still on guaranteed salaries and the analysis of trade returns in 1814 had been partly due to a desire to see how they would have fared if the shares had been really in operation. The analysis combined with the new mood of 1814, with Robertson's revised proposals and with the view that no success against the Northwesters could be expected until force could be repelled by force. The Retrenching System and the Shares of Profits system were both purposefully revised—and again the instructions were sent out via Montreal in spring, so that all might be ready by the time the ships of the year arrived in the Bay.

The half-share of the profits of the trade was again allotted to the officers. But in order to spur on those at the outer fringe of the trade and to put them in a proper relation to those in the Bay-side posts, it was now to be put into a fund which would first give a bonus, to be decided by the Superintendents and Councils of the Departments, to the frontier posts. The remainder of the Share of Profits would then be divided into a hundred shares, of which the Superintendents were to get ten each, District Masters four each, Second Masters two, and Junior Masters one.

As was the way of the Committee in these days, much was left to the men who had to carry the scheme into execution. Auld's successor, Thomas Thomas, who had been brought from the Southern to the Northern Department, was told that 'having thus given our Ideas on these points we leave the arrangements entirely to your discretion as the Governor'. But the 'ideas' which were sent to him were well-informed and pointed. For example the Committee suggested that from Edmonton James Bird might well set up an outpost

on Lesser Slave Lake; Peter Fidler's numerous family should be sent to Red River but he should be employed making surveys between Lake Winnipeg and Severn and Albany; agricultural experiments as a side-line to the timber-trade at Moose were to be encouraged, the greatest care was to go into growing and economising provisions, by which over a hundred men might be saved—and so the Committee shewed their increasing knowledge and active interest.

The re-organisation of the posts so as to encourage expansion showed a similar deference to local opinion, reinforced by coherent and detailed instructions. Uncertain whether Joseph Howse had been successful in making settlements beyond the Rockies, the Committee left that department blank; and while they insisted that the whale fishery must continue at Eastmain, that a post must be set up at Little Whale River and that the interior of Labrador must be explored, they left it to local judgment to decide whether Eastmain itself should be closed down and the business there run from Moose or Albany, and whether George Gladman should be retired. It was therefore not a firm order but a suggestion for comment which set out the departmental organisation which the Committee had in mind.

The Southern Department was fairly simple. With Moose as the Factory it was to consist of a Governor, a second (later two seconds) and six traders. The Governor would normally get ten shares of the profits, but since in 1814 he was only a *locum tenens* whom Thomas had appointed when he went from Moose to York he was given only six. He was to have a roving brief, and was emphatically not to winter at Moose Factory or at any of the Bay-side posts but at some 'Central Inland Situation' to be selected where opposition seemed strongest. New Brunswick House was suggested as appropriate. The seconds were to conduct the trade at the posts where there was no opposition, at Eastmain and at Moose, and were to get two shares of the profits each. The six traders were to be stationed at Albany, Eastmain, New Brunswick, Kenogamissi, Big River and Naoquis-cow. In addition, the Southern Department was to contain the District called 'Albany Inland' which consisted of Osnaburgh, Gloucester House and Henley House, under command of a Chief Trader with a second at Gloucester and a trader at Henley. The Southern Department was therefore to absorb twenty-three of the hundred shares of the profits.

The Northern Department was to be more wide-spread and more expensive. With York as the Factory, from which all distribution

would stem, it was to consist in the first place of York, Churchill, Severn, Trout Lake and Merry's House. Although in the first draft it was agreed that Churchill and Severn should be run by a trader, the final proposal was that the actual trade of York (as distinct from the Factory business) and of Churchill and Severn should be conducted by a second (at two shares of the trade) at each place. Inland, the posts were grouped into the Districts of Saskatchewan Inland, Churchill Inland, West Winnipeg, East Winnipeg and Rocky Mountains. Saskatchewan Inland consisted of Edmonton, Carlton and a post either at Beaver River or Deer's Lake (Lac la Biche) and was staffed by a Chief, a second and one trader. Churchill Inland needed the same officers, the Chief for Deer's Lake, the second for Nelson House, and the trader for either Split Lake or North River. West Winnipeg District needed an extra trader, the Chief being designed for Cumberland, the second for Swan River, and the two traders for Brandon House and Pembina; here came the great weight of the Company's organisation towards Red River. It was expected that opposition would be encountered in West Winnipeg, and it was suggested that the Governor should ultimately take up his residence near the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan, where that river discharges into Lake Winnipeg, and that until a post should be built there he should reside either at Cumberland, Swan River or Playgreen Lake. The last-named post was one of two designed for East Winnipeg District; the other was at Jack River, near at hand, and both were to be run by one Chief. They were essential parts of the developing transport system rather than fur-posts properly speaking. Selkirk was at this time asking for the development of posts near the Rock Portage in Hill River, where Joseph Colen had sited the Depot, and somewhere near Playgreen Lake; and Thomas Thomas was told to agree on places which would not conflict with the Company's trade. Hillier having retired, James Sutherland was sent to command the Irish in East Winnipeg, where great things were expected from them provided they could be kept from contamination by the old servants of the Company, with their ingrained habits of weighing up orders and deciding whether they were valid or not!

The review of the servants and the part which they must play led also to a recurrent urge that they should be placed upon contracts for payment by piece-work instead of at steady wages. This was urged for the timber industry, for agriculture, for the Winter Road and its posts, and even for work in the schooners and sloops by the Bay. To mark the need to break from dependence on the Orkneymen, not only were the Irish retained in service but the Company also set to

work to engage American axemen and some Swedes and Norwegians for work on the Winter Road, on the schooners and on timber clearance. The arguments in favour of such labourers were plausible enough, but the results of the move were slight and were chiefly commemorated by the fact that in 1815 the Norwegians (four of whom were suffering from venereal disease when they joined the Company's ships at Stornoway, and who mingled with the Orkney-men and the settlers with the greatest difficulty) were drafted into the task of clearing the transport routes and so into preparing the Winter Road and building the depot on Playgreen Lake which came to be called Norway House.

It would be unwarranted to assert that so thoughtful and penetrating an analysis and re-organisation of the Company's tactics and strategy was aimed simply at forwarding the Athabaska project. In the Committee's discussions the two things were parts of the same problem, and priority would have been difficult to assess. Still more difficult would have been the precise role and weight which ought to be allotted to Selkirk's colony. But as the discussions of 1814 and 1815 emerged in instructions to the Superintendents and traders it became more and more clear that an Athabaska venture was accepted as the decisive issue, and that the general re-organisation must lead to an increased prosperity and purposefulness which would allow a better challenge to be made in Athabaska; and that the colony must play its part by interrupting the Northwesters' provision and transportation system and by forwarding the Company's supplies of men and pemmican.

So Joseph Howse was diverted from the Rockies (in deference to his own opinion) to take the Irish from East Winnipeg and set up a strong post at Ile-à-la-Crosse, to make an establishment in force and to win the loyalty of the Chipewyans. George Charles, the old Grey-coat boy surveyor, was made Chief at Churchill on account of his knowledge of Chipewyan, and was advised to make his winter quarters in Upper Churchill River, as near to the frontier of the Canadians as possible, while the District, as an expanding unit, was to be separated off from the static 'Old Factory' and was to receive its supplies direct from York via the Burntwood Route (as had been suggested in 1811).

Here Colville's policy of retrenchment and re-organisation was snapped out from the negative emphasis which William Auld had given to it and was made the background for a vigorous and challenging policy. The re-distribution of posts and of shares of profits gives the key to much of the re-organisation when it reveals that

only sixty-seven of the hundred shares of profits were allotted in the first instance. The remainder were kept as a reserve from which enterprising outposts might be rewarded and in the hope that by 1816 the Company's posts might be so extended that all the shares might be needed, except some few to be reserved as pensions for retired officers. The Committee explained this consideration with a plea that the posts should be extended into 'parts of the country not at present occupied by us'.

The Northwesters were fully justified, therefore, in their conclusion that the Hudson's Bay men, with Colville in the lead and with Selkirk at his elbow, were determined to challenge their trade in a new and dangerous way, even in Athabaska and beyond the Rockies. They were justified, too, in seeing the Red River colony as part of this threat, and it would have needed great powers of casuistry as well as detailed knowledge of the Company's affairs for them to have accepted a distinction between Company and colony, especially when they saw Miles Macdonell taking measures which placed their claims and their trade under challenge. This assessment of the colony held good even though on the surface there appeared to be far less hostility between Miles Macdonell and his neighbours of the North West Company than was shown by the Hudson's Bay men; for Alexander Macdonell of the North West Fort Gibraltar was cousin to Captain Miles, and the Governor took obvious pleasure in the hospitality and amusements of the Northwesters. He and his band of twenty-two pioneers had started from York so late in 1812 that it was the first week of September before they had reached and taken formal seizin of 'Assiniboia', and it was then too late in the year to attempt a grain-crop for the bulk of the settlers, who were to follow them, to live on through the winter. The Hudson's Bay posts at Fort William and Pembina supplemented the ducks and geese, partridges and fish, quite adequately for the pioneers. But for the bulk settlement which was expected in November, and for which Macdonell and his party should have made preparation, the outlook was gloomy. The buffalo was the obvious and inevitable answer, but it was an answer which brought the colony into conflict, first with the Hudson's Bay Company and then with the Northwesters.

Having chosen a site for settlement at Point Douglas and left a small party to start clearing the ground, Macdonell then went up the Assiniboine to the White Horse Plain and then southwards to the Company's post near the junction of the Red and the Pembina rivers. His cousin commanded the North West post which was actually on the junction of the two rivers, and the Governor was far

more complaisant towards him than towards the Company's trader, Hugh Heney. Picking a site for a colony fort (Fort Daer), he set his men to work and engaged his own buffalo-runners to hunt for them and to feed them. This, and his entry into direct trade-relations for the purchase of dried and pounded meat, soon brought on a conflict with Heney, and though Macdonell got full support from Brandon House, and though Peter Fidler (who was trader there), Charles Thomas Isham at Point Douglas, and other servants of the Company, took no exception to his conduct, he had revealed that the right to trade with freemen and half-breeds and the need to control the provision-trade of the area lay at issue between the Company and the colony.

As yet, in the autumn of 1812, Macdonell was in a dependent position. He had no goods with which to trade meat and was liable to have to borrow craftsmen, food and implements: moreover when the bulk of the colonists arrived on 27th October he was face to face with his problem and had no room for manoeuvre. The flotilla of nine boats, the bagpipes and the Union Jack in the leading boat, and the reinforcement of Owen Keveny, a firm disciplinarian, in command of a party of mixed Irish and Hebrideans, all made a heady moment. But starvation lay just round the corner, and Macdonell only got through the winter and spring because Hillier came up from the Company's post at Fort William and took command at Pembina. He collected pemmican from the outlying Company's posts on the Saskatchewan, the Swan River and the Assiniboine, and he even took some of the women and children into his post.

Such co-operation ceased when Hillier went back to Fort William, and Macdonell began then to discover that friendly relations with the Northwesters were a poor substitute for alliance with the Hudson's Bay men; for the Agents and the Proprietors were convinced that the colony must be destroyed, however affable its Governor might be; and from the key pemmican-post at Bas de la Rivière came Duncan Cameron, trained in the hard school of opposition by Angus Shaw, to settle in opposition to Fort Daer, to alienate the freemen, to cut down the provisions supplied to the settlers, and to sow discontent and dissension among them. Even Macdonell's cousin Alexander was won over to take a part against the colony, and so much did the Governor accept contact with the Northwesters as a cause of intrigue and indiscipline that in April he forbade any further intercourse with them. Yet they harassed him still, for his first crops turned to little profit, provisions could not be got, and through the summer of 1813 Fort Daer was almost abandoned and at Point

Douglas little would have been accomplished if Peter Fidler, from Brandon House, had not supplied pemmican, surveyed the lots (each with a river-frontage) for the settlers and even provided a bull, a cow and a heifer. Even so, the produce of 1813 was not enough to see the settlers through the next winter. Although potatoes and turnips yielded well, the grain was a failure and Macdonell (who had spent the summer in a journey to York which had brought his quarrel with Auld to a head) had to take almost all the settlers to winter once more at Fort Daer, hoping that the buffalo would again supply food.

By comparison with his first winter, Macdonell found that of 1813-14 'a terrestrial Paradise' at Fort Daer, for both fur companies had withdrawn their posts from Pembina and provisions came in regularly and without rancour. But the earlier experience and discussions with Auld, who found the responsibility for feeding the colonists in an extremity a potential drain upon his trading resources, led Macdonell to the conclusion that he must safeguard the colony's access to provisions by forbidding the sale or exportation of provisions from Assiniboia. He had written to Selkirk in September 1813 of the need to prevent the Northwesters taking pemmican for their northern brigades, and he had then accepted the conclusion that this would gravely upset their system. Yet, knowing that such a move must be actively resented by them, in January 1814 he posted a proclamation, as Governor of Assiniboia, forbidding export from Selkirk's colony of all provisions for one year. There were, of course, flourishing areas from which pemmican could be got, outside the terms of the grant to Selkirk and the proclamation by Macdonell—the Saskatchewan and the Qu'Appelle Rivers in particular—and the proclamation was effective against the Hudson's Bay men as well as against the Northwesters. Macdonell would gladly have seen both go elsewhere, and he certainly was haunted by a genuine fear that Selkirk's new batch of settlers (from Kildonan) would need the pemmican when they arrived. But the North West Company construed the proclamation as a direct attack upon itself, which would disrupt its whole system and must therefore be defied, together with the whole structure stemming from the Hudson's Bay Charter through the grant to Selkirk and the commissions to Macdonell, his Councillors and his constables, which lay behind it. The Pemmican War was at hand.

Reluctantly (and with good reason) Hillier and the Hudson's Bay men accepted the embargo. But the Northwesters from the first, when Macdonell sent a copy to their Fort la Souris opposite to Brandon House, refused to acknowledge it. This was a highly-

charged situation, in which the Governor's authority was set at defiance and he faced the possibility that he might have to use force to 'crush all the Northwesters in this river'. He appointed a Council of Assiniboia to give weight to his authority, swore in a handful of constables and a sheriff, and seized a consignment of pemmican which was coming down from Fort la Souris to provision the inland brigades at Bas de la Rivière. The Northwesters held further consignments at Fort la Souris and began to gather in strength to force a passage if necessary, and as the situation gathered tension John MacDonald of Garth arrived from the Columbia to take control. He pointed out that the American War had left the Columbia Department very short of provisions, and agreed with Macdonell that he should be allowed to take the pemmican for the northern brigades on condition that the Northwesters hauled a supply of oatmeal from York Fort for the colony and also supplied it with pemmican during the coming winter. This was taking literally the argument that the pemmican embargo was designed to provide food for the colonists and was not a move in the fur-trade rivalry, and when that consideration was affected by the news that there was no oatmeal available at York, and by the arrival at the colony of a party of fifty-one Kildonan settlers from York (they had spent the winter at Churchill, having arrived fever-stricken and unable to proceed to York), Macdonell would seem justified in taking a hundred bags of the Northwesters' pemmican as it passed.

It must therefore have seemed possible at this stage, in the summer and autumn of 1814, that the 'Pemmican War' might be averted by adherence to the principle of maintaining only the interests of the colony. Auld was as much perturbed as the Northwesters at the amount of pemmican which the colonists required and it seemed, especially to the sanguine Macdonell, that by treating both companies alike, and by keeping the colony's needs to the forefront, a working solution might be found. But industriously and cheerfully though the Kildonan settlers worked, it soon became clear that they would be heavily dependent on pemmican, and that the general meeting of the North West Company, stirred by William McGillivray, was not prepared to accept the sort of compromise which Macdonell had arranged with John MacDonald of Garth. The colony's sheriff John Spencer (a Christ's Hospital boy and nephew of the Secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company) was arrested for larceny because he had impounded the North West pemmican, and was hauled off to Montreal for trial under the Canada Jurisdiction Act; and Duncan Cameron and Alexander Macdonell were on their

way back from the annual meeting of the Northwesters at Fort William with instructions 'to commence open hostilities against the enemy in Red River'.

Governor Miles Macdonell, in the meantime, had paid a summer visit to York Fort, organising the Rock Depot, the portages and the site for the Winter Road and the Playgreen Lake Depot in the interests of the colony as he came and went. Thwarted and distraught, he was at one time on the edge of a nervous collapse, but he got back to the colony in the autumn of 1814 ready to take up the North West challenge to his authority, which he did by ordering the Northwesters to quit the lands ceded to Lord Selkirk—a move which may perhaps have been intended merely to preserve his Lordship's legal title against squatters' rights but which was immediately taken as a threat to turn them out from their posts. It was a valid enough interpretation of a high-handed proclamation, and it gave the Northwesters a claim to public sympathy which was greatly enhanced by the way in which, at this time, the half-breed *métis* became involved in the problems of settlement, land-title and pemmican-control.

Even the great wealth of the herds of buffalo had proved a difficult and thorny problem, not one in which the superabundant resources of the prairies could be left, unorganised and undisputed, to carry the colonists through their first winters. Sending the women and children into the posts, and sending the men out into the plains to follow the herds and to hunt, seemed the obvious and simple solution. But it fitted in with the Indians' methods of buffalo-hunting, not with those of the half-breeds. The colonists and the Indians, hunting on foot, wanted the herds kept compact and close to the posts. The exuberant *métis* ran the buffalo with fire-arms on horseback, killed them in great numbers, and often stampeded them beyond the reach of the colonists and the Indians. Experience had taught the dangers, and during the summer of 1814 Governor Macdonell had issued a proclamation to prohibit the hunting of buffalo on horseback. The *métis* could not be expected to accept such a veto, nor the Northwesters to refrain from exploiting their grievance. Cameron told the *métis* that they should not be restricted in any way and their chief hunter, Beaulino, organised his fellows into parties who persistently drove away the buffalo as the Indians and the settlers toiled after them on foot, while the North West clerks drew up a petition on behalf of the *métis* in which it was alleged that the land was being taken away from them, 'the free half-breeds of Red River'. Cameron, decked out in an obsolete army uniform, commanded great respect from the *métis* and encouraged them to

think they could defy the Governor, take credit from the Hudson's Bay Company and refuse to bring in the meat which they owed, and he also managed to sow in the settlers' minds some doubt about their title to their lands, and considerable fear of an Indian rising.

Several settlers were therefore persuaded to accept Cameron's offer of a passage out from the colony to the more settled conditions of Upper Canada, and Cameron then secured a warrant for the arrest of Miles Macdonell himself. A. N. McLeod took it on himself as a magistrate in the Indian Territories under the Canada Jurisdiction Act to issue this warrant for the arrest of the Governor on a charge of stealing pemmican, and Cameron with Cuthbert Grant and William Shaw, two half-breeds, captured the cannon of the settlement and organised a summer campaign of violence and intimidation which drove Macdonell into hiding and then brought him out, to surrender himself on condition that the colony should be immune.

Macdonell was escorted down to Bas de la Rivière by Duncan Cameron, Simon Fraser and the North West agent Alexander Mackenzie. There the North West brigades of canoes coming down with their furs each took on some of the colonists who had accepted the Northwesters' offer of transport to desert the colony, and Macdonell and his dispirited companions continued their journey to Montreal. They already knew that the agreement upon which Macdonell had surrendered was not being kept; the half-breeds had continued to harass and plunder the settlers who remained, and the desperate settlers had finally taken their families and their cattle to Mossy Point on Lake Winnipeg, leaving only a handful of men to guard their growing crops, while the half-breeds burned the houses and destroyed the settlement.

The North West victory seemed complete, with the Governor going out for trial on a criminal charge, the settlers dispersed and humiliated, and the *métis* stirred to oppose settlement in a way which should discourage any such attempt in the future. But as he passed through Lake of the Woods Governor Macdonell met Colin Robertson and his Athabaska outfit as they came in. Robertson had been engaged on dangerously vague terms, to go to Montreal, set up an agency for the Company there, recruit and fit out the expedition for Athabaska and get it off to the interior. His expenses were to be paid at the rate of a guinea a day, further remuneration was left open, and he was at best only a temporary servant of the Company for this one specific purpose. As he said later, 'I entered the field . . . like the Knight of La Mancha'.

There was indeed something Quixotic and unpredictable about Robertson once he had thrown in his lot with the Hudson's Bay Company. A slow and dangerous Atlantic crossing, in convoy, had brought him to Quebec late in September 1814. He suspected that his purpose must be known, but to disguise the object of his expedition he pretended that his recruitment and preparations were on behalf of the colony, not of the Company—a subterfuge which made it difficult for Selkirk, later, to maintain that the interests of Company and colony were distinct. With three competent Northwesters recruited (John Pritchard, Aulay McAulay, François Decoigne) and John Clarke from Astor's Pacific Fur Company, he bought canoes and birch-bark, got together a brigade of sixteen canoes, and set off from Montreal in May 1815. Costs were running away with him, and though he secured the firm of Maitland, Garden and Auldjo to act as agents in Montreal for the Hudson's Bay Company, and so got the outfit together, it cost over £7,000, some of which was spent on social and personal efforts to counteract the Northwesters and to give the Company a standing in Montreal such as it had never before attempted. He also gathered in Montreal substantial evidence of the North West plan to rouse the half-breeds and drive the settlers from Red River, but though he sent warning to the colony, and the Committee in London secured protection from the Colonial Office, Sir Gordon Drummond as Governor of Upper Canada accepted the Northwesters' assurance that nothing of the sort was contemplated and so the dispersal of the settlers went unimpeded.

Though Alexander Lean, Secretary of the Company, sturdily denied it, and told Robertson that in any event the Company would never form a merger, and would safeguard the interests of its employees even if it did, Robertson nevertheless found Montreal fur-trade gossip full of rumours of an impending conciliation. Lean's denials notwithstanding, and despite the attempt to pretend that recruitment was entirely on behalf of the colony as a separate concern from the Company, the fear that employees might be sacrificed in a merger was a real deterrent to Robertson's efforts; and there was substance in the rumours too, for the Northwesters were again opening discussions with a background threat to send a ship to the Bay, and Selkirk actually sailed to Canada in 1815 with authority to conclude a settlement if terms could be arranged.

Working under great difficulties during the war years, the Northwesters had found it almost impossible to combine the sort of expansion of men and posts which rivalry forced upon them with the sort of careful husbandry which costs and market conditions required.

By 1814, according to a map drawn by David Thompson, they had seventy-eight posts scattered between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay, the expansion across the Rockies seemed essential since no trade could be driven 'this side of the mountains' without a ruinous loss, and yet in 1814 the departments were curtailed and the posts were withdrawn till the partners were 'as thick—as the vulgar phrase—three in a Bed'. The American capture of Lake Erie interrupted their transport system and appeared to give them some claim on the Colonial Office, but although the ending of the American War in 1814 made the situation easier for the Northwesters and took away some of the disadvantages upon which Robertson had counted, it did not give them the superiority which they imagined was theirs.

Although a close assessment of the situation is quite impossible now, and at the time it appeared as though strength still lay with the Northwesters in 1815, yet looking back upon it we must consider whether the Hudson's Bay Committee had not already got the whip hand, with its balances beginning once more to accumulate, its credit with the Bank of England stable, its posts in process of expansion while its rivals retracted, and its Committee firm and confident. Selkirk's negotiations, at any rate, were unacceptable, and he would abate nothing of his terms, so Thomas Thomas was instructed to deal with a North West ship if it should come to the Bay while Robertson, convinced (and with some reason) that the Northwesters were at their lowest ebb, did his best to foment dissension among his rivals, advised Selkirk to carry things with a high hand, and reluctantly decided that he would have to lead the expedition inland himself instead of remaining at Montreal as an agent. This last decision was due to the fact that Donald McKenzie, on whom he had counted to lead his expedition, had taken employment with Astor and, since he had two brothers in the North West Company, would not come to a firm agreement with Robertson. Another Astorian whom Robertson employed, John Clarke, disappointed him by the revelation that he was too poor a leader to be given more than second place, though he had served with the North West Company before he joined Astor.

So the Knight of La Mancha found himself saddled with the heavy responsibility of leading the expedition, at least as far as Lake Winnipeg, where he hoped that Thomas Thomas would take the responsibility of deciding that Clarke was competent and would release Robertson. But before he met the Hudson's Bay contingent from York, Robertson encountered Miles Macdonell and some of the dispossessed colonists going out in the North West brigades to

Montreal. He hurried on ahead of his party to the settlement, to see what chance remained of his expedition getting provisions there and to collect evidence of North West complicity in the half-breeds' raids, found the Company's posts still intact and, hurrying back to Jack River, there met his own canoes, the bulk of the dispossessed settlers, the Norwegians who were about to build Norway House, and the Hudson's Bay brigade from York. Though still convinced—rightly as it proved—that Clarke's notions of business were defective, Robertson gladly acquiesced in the decision of the Hudson's Bay officers that he was competent to lead the expedition to Athabaska; Robertson was in any case not much impressed by the Company's outfit which had come up from York and which was meagre and inefficient by his lavish standards.

At this stage Robertson had completed his appointed task and might well have returned to England or Montreal. But the colony as a provisions depot had a vital place in his plans, the hopes which the Hudson's Bay servants placed in the colony as a place for retirement appealed to him, and so did the plight of the settlers. After great indecision he abandoned his programme and accepted a formal written request to lead back the settlers and re-establish the colony; and he showed his real merits by the ease and competence with which he organised and heartened the settlers, led a pioneer group of about fifty back to their lands, built a new Fort Douglas, occupied the North West Fort Gibraltar and got in a good harvest. He 'changed the whole course of the business' in a few days. There, in the midst of his obvious success, affectionately dubbed 'Mr. Lofty' by the settlers, Robertson met the new Hudson's Bay Governor of Rupert's Land, Robert Semple.

At the very considerable salary of £1500 a year, Semple represented something new in the history of the Company and was at once a sign of the stability and solvency which it had again achieved and of the Committee's determination to re-organise, resist and expand. A native-born American whose family had returned to England because of their loyalist sympathies, Robert Semple had travelled much in Europe, Africa and South America, before he came before the Hudson's Bay Committee in the spring of 1815. His appointment as Governor-in-Chief placed him over the Superintendents of the Northern and the Southern Departments of the Company and over the Governor of the Colony of Assiniboia also. He had no previous experience of the fur trade, but he seems to have been accepted by the Hudson's Bay men, and he also got on well with Robertson when he came up to the colony in November 1815, approved of all

that had been done, and went on to tour round the Company's posts, leaving Robertson in command at Red River.

Under this régime the winter 1815-16 was the most comfortable which the colonists had so far enjoyed. Robertson had the measure of Duncan Cameron and the Northwesters and deflated their importance by capturing Cameron despite his swagger, by occupying the North West post, and by getting the Indians and the *métis* to hunt for the settlers. But Robertson found the faction among the settlers intolerable and their desire always to proceed to extremes with the Northwesters ill-advised, and in June 1816 he left Semple and the colony to their own devices and set off northwards for York Fort.

It was a disgruntled but exceedingly hesitant Colin Robertson who thus withdrew from the colony, for he had secured evidence from the correspondence of Duncan Cameron that the Northwesters were implicated in the raids on the colony and that a further attack was imminent. But in the spring, when Semple had come to reside at the colony, Robertson had found him intolerably confident in his own judgment of persons and of events, and determined to override Robertson when he thought it necessary. Semple and Robertson were poles apart in character, the one staid, unimaginative and judicious, the other flamboyant but keen and enterprising. It angered Robertson that Semple should trust the Irish storekeeper John Bourke, whom he rated merely as a cowardly assassin; there were other petty differences between him and the Governor, and their quarrel broadened and deepened over the main issue of the way to counter the Northwesters. Robertson seized them and their posts and read their letters to provide justification for his acts. When Alexander Macdonell seized the pemmican brigade from the Hudson's Bay post at Qu'Appelle and then plundered Brandon House, Robertson would have retaliated. But Semple, who had accepted a snub when he demanded the return of the cannon taken from the colony in the previous year, again did nothing save wait for a new attack on the colony to develop, and Robertson felt bound to dissociate himself from such a policy and to withdraw. But before he reached York Fort, sending from Lake Winnipeg a truculent offer to return to the colony if needed, the *métis* had struck. Governor Semple and nineteen settlers had been killed at the 'massacre of Seven Oaks' on 19th June.

The encounter of Governor Semple and of Cuthbert Grant, leader of the half-breeds was, from one point of view, a determinant moment in the history of the Company. For Semple was not merely the Governor of the Colony of Assiniboia; he was Governor-in-Chief of all of

the Company's territories, posts and departments. As such he stood forth to proclaim the right, and the determination, to settle an agricultural population anywhere within the chartered territory of Rupert's Land, even in the very heartland of the fur trade. This, of course, was not the prime purpose of the Company in 1816. The mixture of intentions is inextricable, compounded of Selkirk's desires and ambitions, the Athabaska project and the pemmican trade. Perhaps the outstanding single conclusion for the whole tragic affair is the realisation that Robert Semple was not thinking in the same terms as the half-breeds and the Northwesters. He and his men had arms in their hands, and they had even stopped and sent back to the fort for the small cannon to be brought up to them. But they had no plan save to shew that they were not to be intimidated. The half-breeds also, although they had certainly been gathered together for the purpose of dispersing and plundering the colony, cannot be held to have gone into action on 19th June according to any pre-arranged plan. To that extent they also had no plan. But whereas Semple's lack of plan was due to the fact that he did not anticipate actual violence, the half-breeds' unpreparedness was due to their desire to attack men working in the fields, not a coherent and concentrated force.

The half-breeds and the North West servants under the clerk Cuthbert Grant concentrated against the Red River settlement, not against Fort Douglas, where Semple had gathered his men, abandoning and destroying Fort Gibraltar. When Semple decided to march out to meet the half-breeds as they bore down on the settlers' holdings he refused, at first, to take the cannon with him on the ground that he was not going out to fight but to ask what the Northwesters intended. In that refusal lies a world of revelation. Semple and his men, and the Committee and the Company behind him, were not thinking in terms of the fur-trade frontier, a frontier where a blow could be followed by a volley—as happened on 19th June at Seven Oaks. Their mental approach was that of the England in which they had grown up, an approach in which legal rights and an appeal to an impartial tribunal must ultimately settle issues, and in which recourse to violence could never give an end to disputes. They were surprised, in every sense of the word, by the way in which the half-breeds turned from parleying to shooting, and it is most doubtful whether any aimed shots came from Semple's men in the whole affair—although their ineptitude is clear from the admission that two shots were accidentally let off as the settlers hurried down to the encounter.

So, as much from a failure to realise that the opposition to settlement came from men in whose minds violence and even bloodshed had their places, as from any set and purposeful policy, Governor Robert Semple embroiled the Hudson's Bay Company in the definition of the frontier of settlement in Canada. The massacre raised the issue whether the half-breed and the Indian should assert and vindicate his claims to the soil, his code of law and conduct, or whether an English appeal to justice in legal forms should make a stable frontier possible. The issue was obscured by Selkirk's claims, by the rivalry of the two companies and by the leadership and organisation which the Northwesters gave to the *métis*. It was obscured, too, by the fact that on a long-term view it was doubtful whether the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company as a fur-trading concern could be reconciled to the interests of agricultural settlement. But those factors, real and vital though they undoubtedly were in precipitating and influencing the actual clash, were of less importance than the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company, its Charter and its influence, stood committed to the support of prairie settlement. It was to take a generation and more of shifting expedients before the full consequences of such a commitment were either revealed or accepted. But once the blood of the Governor and the settlers had been shed, the very legalistic approach of the Company meant that it was fully committed to the re-establishment of the colony and so to the economic and social developments inherent in such a policy.

In this, as in the whole of the affair, the Company was faced with the indifference of the Secretary of State for War and Colonies, Lord Bathurst, and with the hostility of the influential Under-Secretary Henry Goulburn. The latter was in close and sympathetic touch with the North West agents; he informed them, took their views and refused help when in 1814 the Hudson's Bay Committee submitted a request for a small military force; and in October 1815 he took upon himself again to refuse although the reasons for denying the first request had by then been exposed by the sheer fact of the dispersal of the settlers and the arrest of Miles Macdonell. The utmost which Bathurst would do was to order Governor Sir Gordon Drummond to impress upon both companies the dangers of repeating their outrages, but this Selkirk found quite unacceptable since it assumed that the two companies had been equally at fault. He had arrived in Canada in the autumn of 1815, to learn of the dispersal of the settlers by a messenger sent by Robertson. He secured a commission for himself as Justice of the Peace in the Indian territories and, failing an escort of troops which

Sir Gordon Drummond steadily refused, the right to take a small bodyguard.

But Selkirk, with a subtlety which characterised many of his actions and which lent colour to his opponents' view of him as a smart sea-lawyer, evaded the ban on troops by enrolling a substantial body of trained ex-soldiers, with their officers, as settlers. The war of 1812 had brought to Canada the de Meuron Regiment of Swiss and German Protestants and the Watteville Regiment of Foreigners. Selkirk recruited a hundred and forty of the de Meurons and twenty of the Watteville Regiment together with a small party of Glengarry Fencibles, promising them grants of land when they had convoyed his boats to Red River. At the same time he offered facilities for a Roman Catholic priest to be sent to Red River to care for the Scottish and Irish Roman Catholics and for the few French Canadians there, a move which might win the loyalty of the half-breeds and which the Bishop of Quebec accepted.

Selkirk's attempts to send up cattle and sheep to the colony met but indifferent success, and a herd sent up from Albany under Owen Keveny, an Irish settler who had entered the Company's employment, only resulted in the dispersal of the cattle and the arrest of Keveny. He was murdered by a de Meuron in the pay of the North West Company as he was being taken to Montreal for trial. This was in the spring of 1816, and by that time Selkirk himself with his soldier-settlers, and with Miles Macdonell leading an advance party, was already on his way inland, determined to follow up the formal protests of the Company and to re-establish the colony. His winter spent in Montreal had taught him much and had embittered him deeply, for he and Lady Selkirk, who had accompanied him, had been forced to realise the extent to which Montreal society, both merchant and official, was dominated by the Northwesters. He had already accepted the belief that the opposition was guided by men 'who, with uncultivated minds and impetuous passions, are accustomed to believe that the remoteness of the country will shelter them from any legal investigation of their conduct'. Now he realised that there was indeed ground for such a belief.

Strongly entrenched in society and in business and official circles in Montreal, the Northwesters were screened by the sheer remoteness of Assiniboia, and Selkirk was profoundly depressed by the harsh distortion with which they represented the motives, the methods and the achievements, of the colony. A series of well-accepted articles in the *Montreal Gazette* challenged every aspect of the venture with force and power, and Selkirk also found the eloquent and powerful

Archdeacon of York, Doctor John Strachan, arrayed against him. His own *Sketch of the British Fur Trade in North America* revealed many of the defects and iniquities of the Northwesters when it was published in 1816, but Strachan's *Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Selkirk*, with its *Postscript* of evidence from deluded and disappointed settlers, carried greater weight in Canada. It set out the colony as the ill-judged venture of a land-jobber and flatly impugned the Company's Charter as the basis of all the land-titles upon which the colony was based.

From the pamphlet-war which split Montreal the Northwesters emerged victorious. Colin Robertson had done something to counteract their influence by flamboyant bravado, generous hospitality and the appointment of Maitland, Garden and Auldjo as agents for the Company. Lady Selkirk did much by her gentle charm and breeding. But Selkirk himself, legalistic in approach but not always accurate on facts, revealed a damaging case against his rivals but yet failed to win support against them from official or unofficial Canada.

The apathy with which Selkirk was met was clearly demonstrated as he made his way inland. At Sault Ste. Marie he was met by Miles Macdonell, who had come hurrying back from Lake Winnipeg with news of the Massacre of Seven Oaks. Wherever the fault might prove to lie, there could be no doubt that violence and murder had been committed and that the simple choice lay between allowing the crime to go unpunished, allowing the victims' friends to avenge them, or setting in motion the processes of judicial enquiry. But John Askin of Drummond Isle and Charles Ermatinger of Sault Ste. Marie, both Justices of the Peace for Upper Canada, both refused to accompany Selkirk to Fort William and bring the offenders to justice. So Selkirk, who had hitherto intended to proceed by way of American territory so as to avoid possible clashes with the Northwesters, not only changed his route (he had determined to go past Fort William when he first heard of the massacre) but decided to exercise his own authority as a Justice of the Peace.

He passed Fort William on the 12th August, 1816, and from his camp a mile or so upstream wrote to ask why the North West Company was holding a party of settlers as prisoners in the fort. They had been brought down after the massacre, and when William McGillivray replied that they were not prisoners but in protective custody, and sent them over, they immediately supplied Selkirk with sworn affidavits of the massacre, deeply implicating the North West partners. Such evidence was too tempting, especially when Selkirk knew

that with his discharged soldiers he had the upper hand, and although there were over two hundred men in Fort William he arrested William McGillivray, who came over to Selkirk's tent without resistance when a constable presented him with a warrant alleging treason, conspiracy and being accessory to murder, but who was disconcerted when he was refused bail and the two partners, Kenneth Mackenzie and John McLoughlin, who had come to bail him were also arrested.

Selkirk then issued warrants against a number of other proprietors and forced an entry into the North West stronghold, where he sealed up the North West Company's papers. He released four wintering partners on parole, but during the night his enemies got to work, the company's papers were seized, many (presumably incriminating) documents were destroyed, and arms and ammunition were distributed and hidden. Selkirk and his men thereupon took full possession of the post, made the North West servants camp on the opposite side of the river, and impounded the furs and the remaining documents. Here he came upon ample proof of the guilt of the Northwesters, in the shape of Hudson's Bay furs pillaged from Brandon House, lists of rewards given and promised to the half-breeds for the Massacre of Seven Oaks, and instructions to seize Selkirk's messengers and letters—the last a crime which had already been committed.

All of this Selkirk reported to the newly-appointed Governor-General Sir John Sherbrooke, and sent his prisoners down to Montreal for trial while he decided himself to spend the winter at Fort William, pending the arrival of government forces.

At this distance of time there can be no serious doubt that the North West Company as a concern, and several partners and clerks as individuals, were involved in the attack by the half-breeds and that even if they had not directly incited them to murder they had certainly condoned it. Selkirk had acted with a high hand; but that was necessary in the absence of official support, and he had thereby obtained conclusive evidence. The effect of his *coup*, however, was marred by the fact that an over-loaded canoe was upset as his prisoners went down to Montreal and the North West agent Kenneth Mackenzie and five other men were drowned. Selkirk refused, too, to allow the remaining North West canoes to depart for the interior, he held the North West furs as security against the damages inflicted by that company, he tried to impose an agreement to submit to arbitration, he took the cattle and sheep at the post as restitution for those which had been driven from the settlement, and by

agreement with Daniel Mackenzie, a Proprietor who was acting without authority in this matter, he took over supplies and provisions from the North West store. He would hardly have been human if he had remained balanced and judicial when such opportunities came to him after so much provocation. But he was giving away points by allowing it to appear that he was engaged upon a merely vindictive exploitation of his advantage. His friends, and even his wife, were afraid that he was going too far. The impression was increased when he sent a band of de Meurons to capture the North West post at Rainy Lake and then to take Fort Daer, Fort Douglas and Bas de la Rivière, and later Selkirk was to find he had given a mighty handle to his enemies by his conduct during this winter.

In his own mind Selkirk was fully justified in all these actions, for he was but redressing the wrongs he had suffered and forcing a reluctant and prejudiced government to do its duty. His actions were certainly justified by the harsh standards of the fur trade. For they were successful; they struck the kind of desperate blow which had most effect in the fur trade, they impressed the Indians and half-breeds with the show of power and authority, and they encouraged the settlers to return and till their fields again. 'The blow which Lord S. struck at Fort William, the re-establishment of the colony, followed by the Catholic Mission are events so strongly impressed on the minds of all of us as to have completely laid the axe at the root of the North West influence and jurisdiction in this part of the country'—the words were the exuberant Colin Robertson's, but he was uttering for many who saw the writing on the wall.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE ATHABASKA VENTURE

It was a weary and dispirited Colin Robertson who derived such comfort from the news of Selkirk's *coup*. With the letters he had captured from Duncan Cameron to justify his high-handed treatment of the Northwesters and to warn Semple of the danger which threatened him, Robertson thought he had left matters at the colony in a threatening, but not dangerous, state. He meant to return to England, having fulfilled his engagement by getting the Athabaska expedition sent off under command of John Clarke; in England he could attend to his own tangled business affairs, and there he would be available to testify in support of the Company if he should be needed. But when he reached York he was overtaken by news of the massacre and, hearing that a party of the settlers was fleeing to the Bay, he turned back, rallied them as in the previous year, led them back to Lake Winnipeg, and then handed them over to James Bird, whom he advised to patrol the lake with an armed boat to protect the Company's property.

Continuing down again to York, Robertson embarked for England on the *Prince of Wales*. But it was 6th October before the ship sailed and she was caught by ice before she got out of the Bay and ran to Moose for shelter. So Robertson was sent first to Eastmain and then to Moose; there he spent a miserable winter, 1816-17, feuding with Joseph Beioley the post-master, who strenuously kept all knowledge of the Company's affairs from Robertson, and whom Robertson finally knocked down in a fit of temper. He knew that he was to be arraigned by the Northwesters for his part in capturing their Fort Gibraltar and seizing and opening their winter express and Duncan Cameron's letters, and his frustration was increased by worry over his private affairs and by the knowledge that the Athabaska expedition from which he hoped so much (for his reward from the Company would depend on the success of the expedition) had failed.

His early fears that John Clarke had not in him the makings of a leader proved well founded, and though Thomas Thomas had accepted the responsibility of sending Clarke up to Athabaska in command, Robertson had clearly had to share the weight of the decision and he had been worried by North West rumours of 'Glorious

news from Athabasca' even before he had left the colony to journey down to the Bay in 1816. Clarke kept no journal of this winter, 1815-16, but from other accounts it appears that he reached Lake Athabaska without trouble and made a favourable start there, setting up Fort Wedderburn on the lake itself while out-posts were established at Hay River in the Great Slave Lake District, on Great Slave Lake itself, on Lesser Slave Lake, at 'the Falls', Great Slave Lake, and on Green Lake. Ile-à-la-Crosse, too, was firmly held and made a tolerable trade during the winter. But, having seen his posts established, Clarke then tried to economise on provisions (of which he was short) and to increase the Company's influence among the Indians by dispersing his men for the winter. Himself he took five half-loaded canoes and set out to winter in Peace River, near the North West Fort Vermilion. Here the partner William McIntosh was in command, and he persuaded and cajoled the Indians to keep away from Clarke and his men, and not to trade with them. Clarke, with reckless irresponsibility, had no provisions with him and the winter set in hard and early. He was stopped at Loon Lake by starvation and left George McDougald there with three canoes and eighty pieces of goods while he pushed on to seek Indians. He failed to find Indians, and ultimately was forced to pledge his personal property to McIntosh for a little food while McDougald, in Clarke's absence and without his consent, handed over the eighty pieces of goods which were in his charge.

Foolish Clarke may have been, but he did not lack a robust courage. Refusing to acknowledge his subordinate's surrender, he set off into the woods in November 'to seek his livelihood'. He survived the hardships, living on berries and small animals. But three of his men had already starved to death before McDougald surrendered his goods, and a further thirteen starved in an attempt to find their way back to Fort Wedderburn. The 'Starving System' as practised should, of course, never have had a chance against a reasonably well-equipped expedition, and it had little effect on the posts which Clarke had set up at Fort Wedderburn and Lesser Slave Lake although Aulay McAulay was forced to surrender his goods in exchange for provisions at Great Slave Lake. The Committee, shaken by the risks which Clarke had taken, and by the privations which he and his men had suffered, insisted that all such expeditions should be well supplied with provisions and should have with them their own half-breed hunters.

The errors into which Clarke had fallen, and the price which he and his men had to pay, left Robertson convinced still of the value

of the establishment set up in Athabaska, and Clarke was no whit dismayed. He was prepared to go back again in 1816, but Robertson was not certain that the Committee would wish to renew the struggle. He was, however, urgent with the Committee that Athabaska should still be supported, and the Committee in the summer of 1816 had as little news of the failure of Clarke as they had of the failure of Semple. They had in any case been forced to prepare a second Athabaska expedition for 1816 in the previous year, when no results had yet been attained and only the costs of Robertson's moves in Montreal were available as arguments against Athabaska. Those costs up to Michaelmas 1815 were £11,800, and the goods shipped for Athabaska through York Factory amounted to about a like sum. When Selkirk heard the news of Clarke's failure he realised that much of this expense must be written off. He, of course, already knew of Semple's failure at the settlement also, and so did the Committee by the time news of the Athabaska disaster came through to London by the ships of the autumn of 1817.

Robertson himself did not arrive in England with this news, though he might well have done so. Learning of the Northwesters' claim that he would be arraigned for his part at Red River, he had decided not to await a formal summons but to travel overland from Moose to Montreal, secure acquittal and so free himself for his own affairs once more. He arrived in Montreal in August 1817, by which time the Hudson's Bay Committee knew that Robertson's private affairs were in a mess, that his brother had died, his partner was near to bankruptcy and expected that the Company would under-write the firm, and that Robertson himself was a costly and extravagant servant. He was met in Montreal by the news that the Committee were much dissatisfied with the results of his Athabaska expedition. He spent much time in Montreal justifying the expedition, explaining that he had always warned that it would be expensive, and comparing notes with Selkirk, who had come down to Montreal via the Mississippi after his winter at Fort William and his spring journey to Red River Colony. The two had much in common, for both were liable to a prosecution by the Northwesters, both had struck effective but questionable blows for the Company and the Colony, and both had found the normal Hudson's Bay officers lukewarm, intent upon retrenchment and suspicious of ventures which would diminish the 'Share of Profits' upon which the Committee were forcing them to depend.

The chief point in common between the two men, however, lay not in their grievances against the Hudson's Bay servants but in

their knowledge that the North West façade showed cracks. This had become clear to Selkirk at Fort William when he realised that some of the partners were scared, and some genuinely reluctant, at the lengths to which opposition had been carried by the Massacre of Seven Oaks. Others were worried over the extent to which their fortunes were embarked in the concern, and one of these, Daniel Mackenzie, had been prepared to safeguard his private interests even to the extent of selling to Selkirk the provisions which he needed for the winter at Fort William. The impression that the Northwesters were anxious to see an end to the struggle, and uneasy about the outcome if they pushed it to a conclusion, was confirmed and illustrated by events at Montreal.

The news that Selkirk had captured Fort William had achieved what the dispersal of the settlers in 1815 and the Massacre of Seven Oaks in 1816 had failed to secure; a Commission of Enquiry had been appointed to mediate between the two companies, all the commissions issued to the partisans of both companies as Justices of the Peace had been withdrawn, and after some difficulty Colonel W. B. Coltman and Major J. Fletcher had been sent off in an attempt to get to Fort William in 1816. They were to enquire into all offences, to arrest all perpetrators and to send them down to Montreal for trial, taking all precautions to avoid a repetition of violence; but since their commission was not established until October 1816 they were unable to get to Fort William before winter. In the meantime McGillivray and the other prisoners sent down from Fort William by Selkirk had easily obtained their freedom upon bail in Montreal and, after a couple of failures, had secured a warrant for the arrest of Selkirk—a shabby document issued at Drummond Island by a magistrate whom Selkirk did not hesitate to describe as ‘an old man in his dotage, never by any chance sober after mid-day’. He refused arrest when this warrant was served on him at Fort William, and with the murder of Owen Keveny as an example and the spiriting of Miles Macdonell out from the upper country as a warning he had reason for cherishing his freedom. His refusal nevertheless put him legally in the wrong and arrayed him against both the Governor-General of Canada and Lord Bathurst and the Colonial Office, already sufficiently antagonised by the influence of Goulburn.

So when Selkirk went in early summer 1817 from Fort William to the colony, there to re-allot the holdings, plan churches and schools, meet the old settlers and introduce the *de Meurons* to the place, Commissioner Coltman followed with some degree of truculence. He presented to Selkirk Governor-General Sir Gordon Drummond’s

so-called 'Prince Regent's Proclamation' of 1st May, 1817, which ordered both sides to restore all goods seized during the conflict. Selkirk was able to point out that the pemmican taken by Miles Macdonell, the provisions from Fort William and the goods in the Rainy Lake post, had been inventoried and sometimes even paid for, but that the Northwesters had merely seized furs and property without account. However, he accepted the order and made restitution, only to find that his enemies had a great advantage in their type of organisation, for it could 'wield the force of thousands of men, while it is scarcely possible to fix responsibility upon an individual partner possessed of funds in the concern'. He could only secure an order from the Agents to the Wintering Partners telling them to hand over captured goods which were still in their possession. Coltman, too, showed little of the hard legal approach to the problem which lay at the back of Selkirk's mind. He was hoping for an accommodation between the two sides and was speaking openly of lenity to be shown to all who were not guilty of deliberate murder. Selkirk was insistent on the need for examples of punishment inflicted by the law on those who had been notoriously criminal. His legalistic attitude caused Selkirk great trouble, for while Alexander Macdonell set off for Athabaska before Coltman's warrant could be served on him and Archibald McLeod had also gone to Fort William too quickly, Selkirk was arrested and was forced to give very substantial bail that he would appear for his trial in the courts of Upper Canada.

Selkirk, therefore, completed his work in the colony; he arranged for seed, sheep and cattle to be sent in and distributed, for a store to be opened, a mill to be built, roads, bridges, and a church to be built. He set out the parish of Kildonan and (a source of some future trouble), promised the Presbyterians there their own minister and gave them a church lot of ground, set up a Governor and Council and a law court. He then made his way down to Upper Canada to answer to his bail. There he was released from the formal charge of resisting arrest under the warrant which the Northwesters had secured against him, but the Attorney-General then proffered against him a comprehensive charge of conspiracy against the North West Company. On this criminal charge it soon became clear that Selkirk would be acquitted despite the obvious high-handedness, not to say illegality, of some of his actions. So, after the case had gone to the Grand Jury, it was adjourned *sine die* and Selkirk never got the satisfaction of a verdict against the Attorney-General.

Even so, he had scored a notable triumph, for it was common

knowledge in Canada—and Selkirk and his advisers also knew the facts—that Bathurst and the Colonial Office had been so worked upon that they had, in effect, already condemned Selkirk unheard. The Commission to Coltman and Fletcher had been based upon the assumption that Selkirk was guilty of resisting arrest, that he was surrounded by a military force which would defeat the execution of the law, that force would be necessary to prevent his resistance, and that it might even be necessary to 'submit to the consideration of Parliament whether the urgency of the case does not require the adoption of some special measure of severity with respect to his Lordship'. Selkirk's journey to Canada, and the collapse of the cases against him, roused considerable sympathy for him, especially from the Radicals. They showed, too, that even with so much support in high places the Northwesters were vulnerable.

But there then followed a whole series of charges and counter-charges between Selkirk and the Northwesters. Five charges of robbery, six of grand larceny, nine of stealing in dwelling-houses, five of riot and pulling down houses, three of false imprisonment and one of assault and battery were preferred against the Hudson's Bay Company and the settlers, while the Northwesters faced forty-two charges of murder, eighteen of arson, nine of burglary, sixteen of robbery, nine of grand larceny, nine of stealing boats and seven of malicious shooting. In the spring of 1818 Selkirk secured eighteen True Bills of Indictment in the courts of Montreal and there were impending thirty-five charges against partners in the concern and a hundred and thirty-five against clerks and employees. Then in September, as further cases came forward, the trials and cases were removed to Upper Canada and Selkirk was faced with the ruinous cost of getting his witnesses and counsel from Montreal to York (Toronto).

Northwesters over whom the shadow of justice was beginning to hang either escaped to American territory, as did George Campbell who had destroyed the colony in 1815, or jumped their bail and made off to the interior. Sergeant Reinhard was indeed convicted of the murder of Owen Keveny and was sentenced to be hanged, but Archibald McLellan, who was in charge of Keveny at the time of the murder, was admitted to bail at Quebec, and was finally acquitted. As witnesses and prisoners began to disperse, the barristers of Upper Canada denied the right of Lower Canada barristers to practise in their courts, and the courts themselves threatened to throw the whole proceedings back to the start again by questioning whether the indictments found in Lower Canada courts could be admitted in

Upper Canada and threw out some indictments upon technicalities. Selkirk's health gave way in the face of so much official obstruction and procrastination, and the Northwesters secured triumphant vindication on all charges save that in which Reinhard confessed to the murder of Keveny. Even he was not hanged.

Exhausted in mind, body and purse, clearly suffering from the tuberculosis of the lungs which carried him off in 1820, Selkirk retired first to Montreal, then to England and then to France. The combination of the Northwesters and the Colonial Office had proved too much for him, though his work lived on in the colony which he had re-established. It lived, too, in the clear discredit of the North West Company and in the ultimate triumph of the Hudson's Bay Company. For Selkirk had revealed 'the spirit of monopoly raging in all the terrors of power, in all the force of organisation, in all the insolence of impunity'.

In this Colin Robertson, tougher than Selkirk both physically and morally, played a part almost as important as Selkirk, and he could also see the signs of success more clearly than the disillusioned peer. His trial was postponed from session to session, but by May 1818 he had at last been tried and acquitted, the jury requiring only a couple of minutes to decide that the charges against him could not be sustained.

His acquittal left Robertson free—to return to England and try to right his tangled affairs, to return to Red River and profit by the opportunity for settlement there, or to accept employment from the Hudson's Bay Company. But his experience left little doubt which course he would choose. During the trials he had met ample evidence that the Northwesters were defeated and knew it. In particular, he had been impressed by the fact that Commissioner Coltman had been at work (he thought at the instigation of the government), to achieve an accommodation—in the ministerial phrase 'to heal the unhappy differences'. Coltman's fellow-commissioner John Fletcher had, in the meantime, received what Robertson called 'his congé for inebriety and maladministration', and it had become apparent that Coltman had been particularly adapted to bring about a reconciliation.

Knowing himself to be the most extravagant servant either of the Hudson's Bay Company or of the colony, for he believed in display, Robertson was in a good position to estimate the cost of the ostentation with which the Northwesters impressed Canadian society and 'choked the channels of justice'. He knew that some partners were worried by the cost of the competition which he was forcing upon

them, that others were hedging their commitments and that the concern could not always find cash to pay its servants. He therefore used his influence to prevent Selkirk from sponsoring an arrangement by which the Hudson's Bay Committee would sub-let its trade and rights to a group of small traders from Canada. A more direct proposal to Selkirk, in February 1818, was turned down because it involved a cessation of the prosecutions; this seemed to Selkirk like compounding felony, and the evidence had shown the character of the Northwesters to be such that he could not contemplate an alliance with them. These overtures were known to Robertson, and he was able also to draw a distinction between the Northwesters who were inextricably committed and those who, like James Leith, John George McTavish and John McLoughlin, had some sort of an alibi from complicity in the events at Red River.

Convinced (like Selkirk until his health gave way) of the poor case which the Northwesters must ultimately present, and of the dissensions within their ranks, Robertson was utterly certain that his Athabaska project, despite its inauspicious start, was the weak point in their trade-system. Failure there would throw the whole of their pretentious economy out of gear; the 'ostentatious display of wealth' which gave them so much consequence, and even won the support of government (in part by providing cheap transport for troops during the American War) was based upon a concept of dominating the whole country, and Robertson was convinced that 'the company are too far advanced to retreat. They must push on. No other alternative is left them. As to arrangements on the basis of a line of boundary, that may be adhered to until our opponents recover their strength, but not one hour longer.' He pointed out to Selkirk that the Athabaska trade was furnishing the money with which the opposition were paying for the vexatious law-suits, that the contracts which he had made with the Canadian servants still had a couple of years to run, and that a small reinforcement would save a great loss. So, even before he had secured his acquittal, Robertson had persuaded Selkirk to reinforce Athabaska from Canada and had agreed once more to conduct the expedition as far as Lake Winnipeg.

In this Selkirk was making the decision without reference to the Hudson's Bay Committee, but James Bird as temporary governor of the Northern Department was to meet the expedition at Lake Winnipeg and was to decide on the commander there; and if called upon Robertson was ready to go all the way to Athabaska and to take command. So Robertson, at last, was in a fair way to become a full and official employee of the Company, and in fact did so. The reason

why he thus ended his Quixotic independence was, of course, partly that his private affairs were in a muddle, his partnership was bankrupt and he was in need of employment. Partly too he was, without doubt, genuinely concerned to see Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company justified and the Northwesters routed. But he might yet have stood out if John Clarke had shown himself a better leader or if the Company had been capable of producing anyone to take his place.

It is a sour commentary on the effects of the Retrenching System and on the system of recruitment for officers that at this crisis in its affairs the Company could produce no leader for Athabaska save Colin Robertson, the ex-Northwester, to replace John Clarke, the ex-Astorian and ex-Northwester. And Clarke would have to be replaced; that was clear. He had followed up the disaster of the 'Starving System' of 1815 by leading in the 1816 expedition and had arrived to find that the North West partner A. N. McLeod had developed to the full the North West technique against the small party which Clarke had left in possession of Fort Wedderburn. McLeod's object was to intimidate the English, to impress the Indians, and to break up all trade between the two. For this he used his authority as a Justice of the Peace in the Indian Territories and combined it with a system of bullying and terrorisation. 'Yesterday I was a judge, today I am an Indian Trader' was one of the remarks attributed to him. He seized on Duncan Campbell, James Yale and Aulay McAulay, the officers in charge of Fort Wedderburn during the summer, and only released them on security that they would keep the peace. Next one of his men seized an Indian who had come to Fort Wedderburn, and so roused a quarrel with Aulay McAulay. McLeod invited the Hudson's Bay men to his post to settle this dispute, and when Clarke arrived he found that McLeod had then arrested all the Hudson's Bay men and their Indians, that he had about a hundred and fifty men under his command, and that he had built a blockhouse on the island in the lake, close to Fort Wedderburn and dominating that sombre ill-constructed house, which was not fortified and had no enclosure.

An Irish bully, Hector McNeil, soon appeared from the North West house to goad Clarke and his men and to provoke John McVicar, an Irish employee of the Company, to a duel. The Hudson's Bay man was disarmed, the Northwester wounded, both were covered in blood and the Northwester (who gave every appearance of being drunk) was trying to murder the unarmed McVicar when the latter's Indian wife intervened, screaming and scratching. Clarke

fetched his gun to prevent murder, Simon McGillivray set on him to take the gun from him, and a general scuffle developed. When the two parties had separated, with no serious damage done, A. N. McLeod appeared, as a Justice of the Peace, and summoned all the English to a court. On Clarke's refusing, McLeod that night seized the men at the fishery on which the English post depended for its living and then arrested Clarke himself when he went to protest. Clarke feared that he might be murdered, and he was only released when the Northwester Robert Henry went security for him, on condition that he handed over thirty pieces of trade goods.

The sorriest part of the whole affair was that Clarke and his men were arrested in the presence of Indians, who were not concerned with legality at all but were simply impressed by the obvious display of force and, in abject fear, kept away from the Hudson's Bay post. The North West triumph was complete even before they arrested a further half-dozen of their opponents for debt and then, towards the end of January 1817, seized Fort Wedderburn completely and again arrested Clarke. At the same time the Northwesters had by similar means taken the small post in Peace River which Clarke had set up under François Decoigne. The news reached Lake Athabaska in April 1817, and the only mitigation was that on this occasion the Indians were so confident in the Hudson's Bay men that they kept their hunts from the Northwesters although the Hudson's Bay post was burned.

This was something to set against Clarke's disasters, and by this time news of Selkirk's capture of Fort William had spread to Athabaska and it was known that William McGillivray and some other partners were being sent down to Montreal for trial. McLeod's capture of Fort Wedderburn was the counter to the blow which Selkirk had struck. But instead of sending Clarke down to Canada to stand trial, the partner George Keith sent him out of the way to Great Slave Lake and, when his prisoner became convinced that this was merely the prelude to his murder and raised an outcry, he was brought back and sent up Peace River to Fort Vermilion in charge of the uncompromising Samuel Black. He got to Fort Vermilion, without accident, in September 1817.

Clarke's conduct called down upon him endless reproof. The Committee in London felt that he had shown little wisdom, the old Hudson's Bay officers felt he had been rash to a degree, Selkirk was suspicious and determined that Clarke should command no more expeditions, and Robertson, feeling that Clarke had indeed made mistakes but had also shown courage and had brought the breath of

competition to Athabaska, still shared in the general disapprobation. Cynical, and knowing the ways of the fur trade, he could not avoid a suspicion that Clarke must have earned so much ill-feeling, despite his sufferings, by something which had not yet been made known—perhaps by an offer to betray his employers to the Northwesters which had been revealed by the papers captured at Fort William. Even so, it was left to Robertson's discretion to decide whether to employ Clarke again or not, and he felt strongly that Clarke was the only man capable of opposing the Northwesters upon their own principles of opposition, and that he could be relied upon to avenge the humiliations to which he had been subjected; so Robertson went inland armed with a writ of Habeas Corpus to secure Clarke's release in case he should still be in the custody of the 'Athabaska Justice' A. N. McLeod.

The period during which Selkirk and Robertson had been struggling with the judicial network had in fact seen Clarke released at Fort Vermilion. He had walked to Lake Athabaska and had there been arrested again and sent out to Cumberland, where he was released, so that he was free to go in once more to Athabaska if he should be needed. The Hudson's Bay flag had in the meantime been kept flying in Athabaska by François Decoigne. Like Robertson, Decoigne had learned the fur trade in the service of the North West Company, with whom he had served on the Saskatchewan, in Athabaska, at Rocky Mountain House and on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan. He was dismissed for extravagance, and was taken up by Colin Robertson for the Hudson's Bay Athabaska expedition on the ground that his cost would easily be offset by the trade he won, since he was one of the best traders the North West Company ever had—and Decoigne brought out twenty-five packs of excellent furs from Lesser Slave Lake in the first year, 1815–16. He spent the winter of 1816–17 in Peace River and was there forced to surrender his post to the Northwesters. He was determined to retire in 1817, but with Clarke a prisoner and the whole of the Athabaska project spread-eagled by the 'Athabaska Justice', Bird made great efforts to keep Decoigne in service and by raising his salary to £300 he prevailed on him to take a small outfit of three canoes from Cumberland up to winter (1817–18) at the 'Old Fort' fishing station on Athabaska Lake. It was, however, little more than a desperate attempt to keep the flag flying; there were almost no goods to trade, the nearness of the fishery was all that kept the little party going and there were no provisions in hand for the journey out in 1818. When he got to Norway House on his journey out, Decoigne resigned,

dissatisfied with his rewards, and Robertson had no chance to take him back again.

So there seemed very little chance that Robertson would find some other commander than himself for the expedition of 1818. The Committee in London could do little to help although they were using to the full the 'Winter Express' system which enabled them to send instructions out in January and February so as to go via Montreal and reach their Superintendent in time for him to have made his preparations and started his campaign in May, instead of waiting till the ships arrived at the end of August. But the Committee were acting in difficult circumstances, and in ignorance due to lack of reports. They had felt confident that in the post-war period of unemployment in Britain they would be able to recruit as many servants as they needed, but they had only managed to send out about twenty in 1817 because the men had assembled at Stromness after the ships had sailed. This did not much matter as far as Athabaska was concerned, for the bulk of the men there were Canadians recruited by Robertson; but the other posts had been told in the Winter Express to strip themselves of men, goods and provisions to reinforce Athabaska and that they should be amply supplied when the ships came through. More important than men were officers—especially if Robertson was to find a replacement—and here the Committee found it impossible to do anything of immediate use. The basis of policy was the fact that good officers could only be trained in the country, and this was the only sound generalisation although exceptions were to be found. The recent appointment of Semple seemed to confirm the rule. The Committee therefore sent out each year two or three young men of good education, mostly from the Highlands of Scotland, to learn the business and to train for responsibility. This was good policy for the future, but it brought no immediate relief.

In their search for officers the Committee were a little influenced by the current trends in British life. In their approach to matters of government, and especially to matters of colonial and imperial interest, the British had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars with a great sense of responsibility strongly influenced by Evangelical and Benthamite thinking. Such currents of opinion had more relevance to tropical colonies, to the West Indian plantations, the social and economic structure of India and above all to the slave-trade, than they had to the fur trade and the north-west. But even in the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company the 'Clapham Sect' had its representative in Benjamin Harrison, who had come forward there

in the changes of 1809. A noted and active philanthropist, he had tried to sponsor a mission to Rupert's Land in 1815 and had been responsible for starting a steady flow of books to the posts from 1816 onwards. The time was not far distant when the Church Missionary Society would commit itself to support him, and a clergyman would be appointed for the care of the active and retired servants of the Company. In the meantime the virtuous principles of the Committee found expression in the recital of a charge against Thomas Vincent, Governor of the Southern Department, that he had been guilty of partiality, intolerance, putting away his wife, and drunkenness. In more general terms the Committee decreed that no drunkard should be accepted as an officer: they could not tolerate 'this disgraceful vice', and though the shortage of officers was so great that Vincent was retained, with a sarcastic dismissal of the charge, the Committee's views were such that the hard-drinking trader, like the man who took the law into his own hands, was barred to the service. Robertson himself almost came under this last ban: the 'system of retaliation' practised by some of the Company's servants only gave colour to further North West depredations and was again banned in 1817. 'The law does not permit injuries to be retaliated upon another party or at another time', wrote the Committee.

Hamstrung by such high-minded principles, the Committee were further handicapped by lack of accurate information. The journals kept in Athabaska were themselves defective, though Robert McKenzie's Journal was approved and he was given the very considerable gratuity of £50 as an encouragement for himself and for others. But although the Committee were alive to the value of the Winter Express system the traders were slow to use it to any purpose in sending information to England, and during these important years the ships fully revealed the difficulties and dangers of navigation to Hudson Bay. In 1815 the *Prince of Wales* arrived safely back from York, but neither the *Eddystone* nor the *Hadlow* got out from the Bottom of the Bay and that year there was no news in London of affairs in the Southern Factory or Department: the captains had in fact returned to winter at Stratton's Island. Next year, in 1816, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Emerald* started too late from York Fort and the Committee had to make decisions in ignorance of events in the Northern Department and Athabaska, though they had some rumours which Vincent had forwarded in a December Winter Express from New Brunswick. Again, in 1817, though the *Prince of Wales*, the *Emerald* and the *Eddystone* came through safe from the Bottom of the Bay, the *Britannia* from York was held at

Severn, to be destroyed there by fire in 1818, and the Committee once more had no authentic news of affairs in Athabaska and the north.

Such a succession of maritime disasters, though they involved only one loss, robbed the Committee of the affidavits, journals, and detailed reports which were required to support remonstrances to government. Plans had to be based more upon first principles than upon expediency and up-to-date information. Both Athabaska and Red River suffered, but while the onus lay with Selkirk for decisions on Red River, the Committee had to shoulder the responsibility for Athabaska. By May 1817 they had only rumours of Clarke's failure in Peace River and the tragedy of the 'Starving System', and could do no more than hope that the 1816 expedition, with its high costs and eighty men, was in better hands and not entirely lost. They knew nothing as yet of the purpose to send in Decoigne—indeed that decision had not yet been made in May 1817. But they sent instructions that some reinforcements must go into Athabaska. They hoped for a vigorous trade, but they ordered that at all costs there must be adequate food, even at the expense of a trifling outfit in trade-goods. So they might be assured either of a share in the trade or of 'such arrangements with the N W Co for a division of Country as will compensate us for our outlay and place this Company's trade on a respectable and sure footing'.

The Committee had to combine with this determination to persevere in Athabaska the motivation of officers by means of the 'Share of Trade' and the salary system which had been put into effect during the struggle. Robertson maintained that the 'Old Servants' of the Company were clearly distinguishable from the 'New Servants', whom he had introduced, by their lethargy and unwillingness to push a new venture. A general criticism of the Company's methods was given an edge by his claim that the 'Old Servants' were so pre-occupied with retrenchment and their 'Share of Trade' that they were averse from all innovation; their 'snug business' lay too near to their hearts. In this matter the Committee were not ungenerous. Although the considerable losses of the Athabaska expeditions of 1815 and 1816 ought, by the terms of the salary system, to have fallen equally between the traders' 'Share of Trade' and the Company, the Committee decided that all losses up to June 1817 should be borne by the Company alone. This must have been a comforting decision to Bird, Thomas, Vincent and the other 'Old Servants' of the Company. But it meant that when Robertson was chosen to take in the expedition of 1818 they saw their 'Share of Trade' tied up with his success or failure.

Even so, knowing his tendency to extravagance and knowing the dangers of Athabaska, they had little choice in the matter. James Bird, who with mock-modesty had first refused and then accepted the post of Governor left vacant by the death of Semple and the refusal of Thomas Thomas, had already demanded Clarke's resignation and reported to the Committee that, vain and pompous as he was, he would never manage a large and complicated business. Although Bird was officially given the option whether to send Robertson on from Lake Winnipeg or not, Selkirk had in fact already written to tell him that Robertson had agreed to go to Athabaska, and the latter easily yielded to the argument that the young men had lost confidence in Clarke, that a new face was necessary, and allowed himself to be 'induced' to comply with Bird's solicitations to return. It took him, nevertheless, over a fortnight at Norway House to make up his mind, arrange his affairs, organise the expedition, and set off for Cumberland House. Already before Robertson's arrival at Norway House in 1818 John Clarke, who had come down from Cumberland, had organised crews and loading for nine canoes and sent them off, and other brigades followed, so that in all, including Ile-à-la-Crosse and Lesser Slave Lake, Robertson commanded an expedition of about twenty-six officers, a hundred-and-sixty men, and twenty-seven canoes. Not all his men, his officers or his supplies were assets, and one party of five canoes, five officers and fifty-three men, arrived at Norway House starving, manned by 'the Blind, lame and decrepit' and with a ridiculous and rotten assortment of goods.

Robertson resolved to make no particular effort against Ile-à-la-Crosse but to concentrate his main effort on Lake Athabaska, where he would himself winter at Fort Wedderburn. Convinced as ever of the value of John Clarke—'He cajoles, condoles, and seems to command every string that can touch the heart of a Canadian'—he gave him a lecture on the improvidence of not carrying adequate provisions and, despite his boast that even now he was 'not going to drag grease into Athabaska', appointed him to winter in Peace River.

The lecture was wasted on Clarke, and when the brigades had got to Fort Wedderburn (which Decoigne had left in a desperately broken-down state) and Robertson prepared to send off the Peace River party, he found that Clarke had been as good, or as bad, as his word. He had come 'galloping in' in a half-laden canoe, bringing no pemmican and confidently expecting that Robertson would supply his needs. This indeed Robertson did, but with an ill grace and a rising anger. His own cargoes were heavily weighted with provisions

and he could afford to help Clarke, for the fishery attached to Fort Wedderburn was reliable. But Robertson had not loaded himself with pemmican (taken up at Cumberland House) in order to supply Clarke's deficiencies. His neglect of trade goods was part of a policy. Hitherto he had taught that the Company must be prepared to accept losses in Athabaska because it was so important to get a footing there. Now he was intent to prove that the North West Company must also trade at a loss in that department. For this it was essential that the Company's posts should be independent of all threats or pressure. The Indian must be made to realise that he could rely upon an alternative market to the Northwesters, that the monopoly profits which had enabled the Canadians to become 'economical dashers' (as Robertson called them) would dwindle, and the whole of their structure would crumble. The Hudson's Bay men must be self-supporting, and the Indians must see again as many as possible of the men whom they had seen victimised and driven out in the previous year.

This involved not only a supply of provisions which would have been excessive in a normal year, but something of a crisis of conscience. For the 'Athabaska Justice' had during the winter 1817-18 exacted from the common servants at Fort Wedderburn an oath that they would not return to Athabaska for two years. It was, of course, beyond McLeod's power to exact or to enforce such an oath, and so the Committee eventually told their Governor. But although Robertson found the French-Canadians ready to believe that such an oath had no value because it was made to a heretic he found the Orkneymen less supple and was forced to forego several good fishermen. Nevertheless he went in with a good heart and kept well ahead of the North West brigade (which he delayed by a series of 'accidents' at the portages) to arrive at Fort Wedderburn on 17th September, 1818. He was almost a month ahead of the rival brigade, which did not reach Fort Chipewyan till 8th October, and by that time Robertson had sent Clarke off to Peace River, made reassuring contacts with the Indians and fitted out several, set up his fisheries and settled his fall business. The reassuring thing in all of this was that the Chipewyan Indians were undoubtedly glad to see the Hudson's Bay men back again. Numbers were on Robertson's side, too, and John George McTavish as Superintendent of the North West Company's affairs in Athabaska reported to the agents that his opponents were in 'overwhelming force'. So when the North West bullies under the lead of the irrepressible Samuel Black began swaggering, threatening and intimidating, they found that the

Indians had a new confidence in the Company's servants, and that the latter stood up for themselves and gave as good as they got. 'One of their principal hair pulling heroes got a most unmerciful thrashing from a little man of ours of the name of Bushe' wrote Robertson in triumph after an encounter between Joseph Bouche the interpreter and the North West 'strong man' Soucisse.

All of this was gall and wormwood to the Northwesters, and Robertson followed up his advantages by presents of rum and other goods. Simon McGillivray Junior was writing early in October of the unheard-of disaffection and independence which the Indians were showing at Fort Chipewyan. The North West Company had lost 'character, reputation and fame' and McGillivray was desperately certain that the evil would spread far and near unless 'some event will cast up' to cancel the impression which Robertson had made. The 'event' occurred just a week after McGillivray had penned his letter. On 11th October Robertson was up before dawn and was about to sit down to breakfast when he was told that Soucisse had come over from the North West post to demand a return fight with Bouche. Putting his pistol 'as I thought' into his pocket, Robertson went out to expostulate, and there found Simon McGillivray. During the discussion which followed, Black and a party of men rushed Robertson from behind. The pistol, Robertson explained rather lamely, fell out of his pocket, got entangled in his clothes and 'went off' in the struggle. His enemies accused him of brandishing fire-arms, threatening a breach of the peace, and attempting murder, as well as of stirring up the Indians to burn their post.

Through the highly coloured and obviously partisan accounts of the scuffle it is now almost impossible to sift the truth in all its details, but it seems probable that Robertson went armed, and flourished his pistol, out of bravado and not out of any wish to kill. It is equally probable that in so doing, and in threatening armed force, he committed a breach of the peace. It is probable, too, that McGillivray and his party did not start out with any deep plan but merely with the purpose of creating another vexatious and humiliating incident at an hour of day when it would most annoy, and in circumstances which would make their rivals especially vulnerable—for Robertson had risen so early because one of his men had accidentally killed another. It is most improbable that they set out with the purpose of capturing Robertson. But, profiting by the pistol-shot, the general scuffle, and the strange fact that none of the Hudson's Bay men came to support their leader, that is what Black and McGillivray accomplished, bundling into a canoe the angry and

exhausted man (too exhausted to upset the canoe and escape by swimming) and taking him from the island to their own post at Fort Chipewyan. J. G. McTavish, in command there, found relief in the 'coersive measures adopted by the Gentlemen', and hoped it would divert the Indians and undermine their faith in Robertson. But at the same time he put the responsibility upon Samuel Black, whom he described as 'certainly a desperate character', and he explained that 'It was done so unexpectedly, and at a time when business pressed very heavy on my hands, that I was completely at a nonplus how to act'.

When even J. G. McTavish had begun to be worried by the desperate character of his men, and realised that somehow he would have to get Robertson safe out to Canada to stand a trial, the weaknesses of the North West Company were indeed being revealed. Robertson had plenty of chance to observe the North West establishment from within, for McTavish made a prison for him out of the post's privy and there kept him for the remainder of the winter. It would not have been human if Campbell, Clarke, and the others whom Robertson had soundly berated for allowing themselves to be taken by the 'Athabaska Justice', had not crowed a little over his discomfiture within twenty days of his arrival in Athabaska, and they did in fact chuckle over it. But though Robertson was kept in close confinement, he caused a great deal of trouble and kept up his own spirits and those of the Indians and the clerks whom he should have been leading by defiant speeches to the Indians, and by a series of spirited complaints and by constant correspondence. He concocted a cipher, and under the noses of his captors conducted the business of his post and department, and reported the growing division among the North West wintering partners, suspicious of the Montreal agents and seriously worried at the extent to which they and their fortunes had been committed in the struggle. He was able to confirm that they were 'reduced to the greatest straits', that their only hope lay in a junction with the Hudson's Bay Company and that the wintering partners were ready to break away. But he also realised, from his previous knowledge, that only James Leith, John McLoughlin, McDonald (probably John McDonald 'Le Borgne') and the brothers James and George Keith had the firmness of character to stand against the agents. A little diplomacy would 'waltz the remainder about, to any tune the McGillivray's chose to strike up'.

Robertson's cipher was at last discovered, but by that time the Indians were won over, and by the time his captors began to take Robertson out to Montreal, in June 1819, there were many signs

that the Indians were smiling at the 'pretended authority' of the Northwesters and that the latter were beginning to be afraid of retaliation for their high-handed methods in trade. From Great Slave Lake few furs were got, but by the end of the season Athabaska had produced forty packs, and the posts at St. Mary's and Colville House in Peace River had played their part in this, as had Lesser Slave Lake.

Robertson promised to be a difficult prisoner to get down to Canada. He meant to escape if possible, and he had always in his mind the way in which Owen Keveny had been murdered. In running a chute at Pin Portage, Churchill River, he was almost drowned in highly suspicious circumstances—for his was the only canoe which was not portaged and even from his canoe all save Robertson and two men were alleged to have been disembarked—and when he reached Cumberland he made his escape. This was by a somewhat shady expedient which gave him some uneasiness; he merely nodded his head but did not pass his word when asked whether he would give his parole if he were allowed to visit the Hudson's Bay Post. 'However it is over now' ruminated the easy-going Robertson as he settled back among his friends and then continued his journey down-stream 'with more than ordinary pleasure'.

It was indeed over, in a much fuller sense than Robertson intended, or even knew. He had himself made a great contribution towards decision on the major issues; for the trade of Athabaska was firmly established, and in Peace River during winter 1818-19 John Clarke had struck a blow which fell within the Committee's instructions, but which had put the Northwesters out of countenance and out of pocket. He had sent his subordinate Joshua Halcro ahead to set up a post on Loon River (Colville House) and then sent Chastellaine to establish Smoky River. Being short of pemmican despite the supplies given him by Robertson, Clarke had to hunt his way upstream, but he still out-paced the North West brigade, and the same shortage of food sent Chastellaine to the North West post at Vermilion to seek support from the partner McIntosh; he was later allowed to depart on condition that he left his goods behind in the fort, but this was not to be a successful repetition of the tactics of 1815. Clarke and Halcro marched up to Vermilion, forced an entry, disarmed the Northwesters and marched out with their own impounded goods. Apparently they accepted a refusal to provide them with provisions, but it was a notable and public rebuff for the Northwesters. Though there were troubles with the Indians during the winter, and Chastellaine refused his duty while four of the men

deserted (they were dissatisfied with their ration of eight pounds of fresh meat a day, or of five pounds of 'half-dry'), Clarke and his men scored a great moral victory. The Company's hold on Peace River was marked by the fact that when Clarke came swaggering out in the spring of 1819 he left St. Mary's post established at Smoky River and Colville House at Loon River. The Indians knew it, so did the Northwesters, and the Hudson's Bay Committee had already decided upon a further expedition for 1819 and had asked Robertson to lead it. The split between the wintering partners and the agents in the North West Company was coming to the forefront. This Robertson had always emphasised. The rivalry in Athabaska had played a great part in revealing such a division, and Robertson's letters on this topic, written from the captivity of a North West privy, were prophetic in their analysis of the rift which would develop. He and the Athabaska venture, intertwining with Selkirk and the Red River Colony, had by the summer of 1819 brought the rivalry with the Northwesters to its last phase, and that in a mood of confidence which would have seemed remote and unreal before the Athabaska expedition was resolved upon in 1814.

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CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE ATHABASKA CAMPAIGN

The last phase of the struggle, like the whole history of the Company, involves a link-up of events in London with those in Rupert's Land. Of this link the most immediate and apparent sign in 1819 was that, as Robertson continued on his way down from Cumberland to Norway House, he was met in Cedar Lake (Lake Bourbon) by a canoe bringing the hilarious news that all the North West partners had been captured at the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan. Later, at the Grand Rapid itself, he found John Clarke 'standing at full length and in all his glory', and then met the hero of the exploit himself.

This was William Williams, the new Governor-in-Chief. Since the death of Semple the Committee had spent much effort in seeking a successor. Thomas Thomas, Governor of the Southern Department, was reluctant to accept the appointment on a temporary basis and spent the season 1818-19 at Cumberland House. James Bird therefore acted, with some show of reluctance, during the preparation of Robertson's journey to Fort Wedderburn, and the Committee continued their search for a suitable Governor. Despite their insistence that their officers could only be trained on the job, they were seeking a man with wider experience and more definite habits of command for the chief post. But it was not easy to find such a man, even from among the numerous army and navy officers whom the Napoleonic Wars had left seeking employment. A cousin of Lord Huntley's, Adam Gordon, a man of great activity, capable of travelling in cold and uninhabited countries, and of enduring great privations, educated at Sandhurst and resident in the West Indies, seemed well qualified for the post. But nothing came of that negotiation and it was only on the eve of the sailing of the ships in May 1818 that a choice was made of William Williams. He was a former ship's captain who had served with the East India Company. He appealed to the Committee as 'A Gentleman of amiable and conciliatory manners and of an Enterprising and active mind and whose talents and habits of life are calculated to command obedience and to insure strict discipline'. Bird, full of knowledge and experience of the trade, had shewn a lack of decision in the way in which his letters had indicated that he would find the responsibilities of being Governor too

heavy. He was taken at his own word, especially when he reported that the business of the Northern Department was in such confusion that he felt incapable of restoring it to regularity. Williams, it was hoped, would easily restore order—and Bird was retired to the Red River Settlement in 1820 because he indulged in a series of petty quarrels with Williams.

There must have been many occasions which justified Bird's resentment, for Williams knew nothing of the conditions into which he stepped as Governor; yet he immediately managed affairs so as to gain very considerable prestige. Here his power lay in his effective grasp of obvious strategy. The Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan had been accepted as a focal point, the best situation for the Governor's residence, in 1814; it tied in with Robertson's suggestion that an armed boat on Lake Winnipeg would give the best sort of protection against the Northwesters, for James Bird had then followed up the decision to make the Jack River post the centre with a suggestion that an adequate force of men at the Grand Rapid could prevent any North West canoes from passing. That was in 1816, when Robertson and Bird both agreed that the Company had not sufficient men to attempt a stroke. But in 1817 Bird again suggested the Grand Rapid as the ideal spot for the rescue of John Clarke and the other men whom A. N. McLeod had imprisoned in Athabaska. Williams was therefore merely accepting his predecessor's notions when he spent his first winter in the country assembling a force of Canadians, Company's men, and de Meurons from the colony, at the Grand Rapid.

While the Northwesters merely thought that 'this new Imported Governor Williams may probably wish to revive the old worn out story of the Jurisdiction claimed by the H.B.', Williams in 1819 was preparing something far more purposeful. His force mustered 'Thirty Men as Constables' including twenty de Meurons; he mounted a small cannon on a barge (Robertson's old plan, which he had recommended to Bird) and mounted another small cannon and two swivel guns so as to command the foot of the rapid. There he was joined by John Clarke, coming out full of confidence from his winter in Peace River; then on 18th June the Northwesters began to come down to their rendezvous at Fort William and, suspecting nothing, the partners walked down while the canoes were shot down the rapid. First came J. D. Campbell and Benjamin Frobisher with a couple of French-Canadians, then William Connolly and John McDonald (Le Borgne), then four more French-Canadians, then on 23rd June Angus Shaw, John George McTavish (who had so

recently held Robertson a prisoner) and William McIntosh. Each was captured in turn.

This was a paralysing blow to the North West system as well as to the faltering pride and prestige of the concern, a move after Robertson's own heart, which he warmly approved. The legal validity of the arrests was more than doubtful, despite the formality of swearing in constables and presenting warrants, for although Williams had a sheaf of warrants, upwards of seventy in number, which had been drawn out in Montreal and brought up to him by express canoe in the previous autumn, he had to supplement these by warrants drawn by himself as Governor of Rupert's Land, and neither of them was easily defensible; the Rupert's Land warrants depended on the less defensible clauses of the Charter, and the Canadian warrants were either invalid in Rupert's Land or, if they were effective, they implied that the courts of Canada had jurisdiction over the Company's territories. Williams, however, cared little for these legal points. He struck Samuel Gale, Selkirk's lawyer, as rather a goose, and he certainly cared little for the law. When Angus Shaw flourished the Prince Regent's Proclamation of 1817 he was 'desired very politely to desist, as we knew it, and were acting on it'; but the North West version was that he replied 'I care not a curse for the Prince Regent's Proclamation; Lord Bathurst and Sir John Sherbrooke by whom it was framed are d——d rascals'.

Having got his prisoners, Williams had to do something with them. In company with Robertson he took them down to Norway House, and so to Rock Depot, losing William McIntosh on the way. At the Rock the Company's outfits were prepared to go inland again, and Williams and his prisoners continued on down to York. He had by now determined to send his prisoners to England for trial, but Benjamin Frobisher escaped and, after great hardships, died of exhaustion at Cedar Lake before he reached his friends, and although Williams sent Shaw, McTavish, and Cameron to England they were released for lack of a prosecutor and the Committee wrote, in 1820, to tell him to send Frobisher (of whose death they did not know) to Canada for trial, adding that there was no court in England competent to try crimes and offences committed out of Great Britain except for murder and treason.

This was a legal dictum of more than doubtful validity; but it was true that there was no case against these men by English law, and even more true that the Colonial Office and even the Committee of the Company were by 1820 averse from embarking on a series of trials for which witnesses would need to be brought across the

Atlantic. The 'decision of character' which was the chief virtue which Robertson had remarked in the new Governor had showed itself at a slightly unfortunate time, when all was tending towards some sort of negotiated settlement. Nevertheless the blow which Williams struck was a vital one, especially because it revealed the vulnerability of their system, and even of their persons, to those Northwesters who were already beginning to have qualms.

In the early phases of the struggle after it had been affected by Selkirk's project of a colony at Red River, the Company and Selkirk had tried in vain to get the Colonial Office to take an active interest. But the official apathy and indifference of 1815 were at last yielding to pressure. Even before the dispersal of his settlers in 1815, Selkirk had written to Bathurst 'Let the authors of the evil meet the punishment that is due, but let not the settlers at large be left to perish, the innocent with the guilty', and he did indeed secure an order for military protection for the settlers, but only on the condition that it would be 'Such protection to the settlers at the Red River, as can be afforded without detriment to his Majesty's service in other quarters'—which meant that Governor Sir Gordon Drummond took no action. In fact Drummond moved in the opposite direction, for he laid the matter before 'the heads of the North-west company, whom I knew to be persons of the utmost integrity and respectability' and reported back to London a mixture of his own view that a military force was impracticable and might lead to an Indian war, and of the North West view that no moderation or conciliation should be expected from Miles Macdonell and the settlers. In this Sir Gordon was but emulating the conduct of the Colonial Office, for Henry Goulburn had communicated the correspondence with Bathurst to McTavish, Fraser & Co. and Inglis, Ellice & Co. as agents of the North West Company, and had got from them a firm challenge to the Company's Charter as the basis of the colony.

The dispersal of the settlement in 1815 did nothing to change Sir Gordon's views; again he consulted William McGillivray and although he allowed a personal body-guard of an officer and five or six soldiers to Selkirk he reiterated his views that a military force was unnecessary and impracticable, and he represented the Northwesters as kindly philanthropists who had conveyed the settlers to a place of safety. Colvile however, acting as agent for Selkirk, pressed Joseph Berens, Junior, as Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company to point out that the half-breeds and Northwesters had taken some guns which had been issued by Government for the protection of the colony together with the settlers' muskets and guns, and this stirred

Bathurst to action of a sort. But he only uttered the order of 3rd January, 1816, which called upon both companies alike to desist from hostilities, and Sir Gordon Drummond duly promulgated the order, with its emphasis upon the 'mutual outrages of the servants of the North-west and Hudson's Bay companies'.

Drummond's successor as Governor-General of Canada, Sir John Cope Sherbrooke, took office in May 1816. Less ingenuously impressed than Drummond by the Northwesters, and influenced in his turn by the charm of Lady Selkirk, Sherbrooke was daunted by news of the Massacre of Seven Oaks and could see no prospect of effectively controlling the rivals at a distance of two thousand miles. His suggestion, from the first proposal that commissioners should be sent to Red River, was that they should 'adjust the quarrels of the contending parties', and this was put forward as an alternative to leaving the matter to the decision of a court of law. So despite the apparently firm judicial tone of the commission under which Coltman and Fletcher set out for Red River, to investigate the massacre and Selkirk's subsequent capture of Fort William and the other North West posts and property, it is clear that the commissioners were sent to 'mediate between the two companies' rather than to bring the guilty to justice. Even Sherbrooke was convinced that there was a great deal to be said on both sides—especially since Colin Robertson had led back the settlers, captured Duncan Cameron, opened his mail, and destroyed the North West posts before handing over the colony to Semple, and Selkirk had struck his great blow at Fort William. Sherbrooke was, however, impressed by the weight of the problem, the possibility of an Indian war if both companies failed to supply the Indians' wants, the chance of the *métis* expelling all whites from the territory, and the threat of an appeal to the American government. Distance was an insuperable obstacle to effective rule, and so even in their sternly judicial commissions Coltman and Fletcher were instructed that 'You are particularly to apply yourselves to mediate between the contending parties'.

Selkirk, rather than the Hudson's Bay Company, was by the end of 1816 the particular object of North West hostility and of the hostility of Henry Goulburn and the Colonial Office also. For in recruiting the de Meurons and taking them inland he had done what the government most wished to avoid, and what the Northwesters most feared. In April 1816 Goulburn had passed on to the Company the government's decision to submit to the Law Officers of the Crown the question of the extent of the Company's jurisdic-

tion and had added the rider that 'In the interim his Lordship has only to express his decided objection' to the Company arming its servants 'for the defence of a Territory, the title to which, in the extent to which it is asserted is to say the least of it extremely doubtful'. The Company agreed to defer arming its servants in the hope that government would supply protection for goods and property. This, of course, was not forthcoming, and by its dissuasion of the Company, and its reluctance to act, the government was playing into the Northwesters' hands. The Massacre of Seven Oaks took place as these decisions were being transmitted to Canada.

But Selkirk had armed himself and had taken Fort William. He focused upon himself the disapproval of government and the hostility of the Northwesters, and that hostility was bestowed on his projects as much as on himself. Although, from the start, Miles Macdonell had protested that he and the colony had nothing to do with the commercial concerns of the two companies the Northwesters had refused to accept the distinction and had insisted 'That such settlements struck at the root of the North-West company of Canada, which it was intended to ruin'. They were convinced in general terms 'that when colonization advances, Indians and their trade disappear', and in particular that Selkirk had become the avowed rival of the North West Company, that he was 'maturing an exterminating blow against their trade'. It was held on the one hand that he was the predominating influence in the Hudson's Bay Company, a 'designing and dangerous character' with a complete ascendancy in the Committee, and on the other hand that he neither understood nor was interested in the fur trade and was prepared to see both companies ruined so long as his colony (and his rights and profits as a landlord) could be maintained. There was support for both arguments, for after his capture of the North West goods and furs at Fort William, Selkirk almost inevitably got himself embroiled in the fur trade as such.

The distinction between colony and trade was bound to be slight and artificial when the Company's Charter played so important a part in both, when supplies, transportation, provisions and servants were common to both, and when both shared the great geographical characteristic that they approached Red River from Hudson Bay and not from the St. Lawrence, and so outstrode the frontier of trade, of settlement or of government, which was slowly advancing from Canada. But when, despite Lady Selkirk's warning that he should keep clear of the fur trade altogether, Selkirk took the captured furs and traded them, and accepted the mingling of interests,

there was good reason for the Northwesters to insist that colony and company were inseparable. When Lady Selkirk could write 'I wish you would make some terms for yourself with the Hudson's Bay Company. I think you might fairly say that you have fought their battles, and laid their enemy on his back and that they must assist in what remains to be done', Ellice might well affect surprise at being told that Selkirk was not an agent of the Company and held no office in it.

Even Bathurst found this distinction hard to accept. He sent for Governor Joseph Berens in January 1817 and suggested to him that the Company should recall Selkirk, or dismiss him. The position had to be explained to the Colonial Secretary, and although his ignorance lent support to the suspicion that he had never read any of the papers which were sent to him, he might well have made the same suggestion even if he had been better informed. The distinction, in any case, meant little, for Bathurst's interest was spasmodic and Henry Goulburn shaped policy under the 'strange ascendancy' of Edward Ellice and the North West Company. Though Bathurst conducted interviews on Red River matters, he was impatient of the detail and the reiteration, he regarded the whole affair as a sordid commercial struggle, and he does not appear to have appended his signature to the dispatches until February 1818.

It was, therefore, Goulburn who was responsible for the two dispatches which went to Sherbrooke on the heels of Bathurst's interviews with Berens, and which represent the official Colonial Office reaction to the Massacre of Seven Oaks and to Selkirk's capture of Fort William and his refusal to accept arrest by virtue of the Drummond Island warrant presented to him. The news of the Seven Oaks Massacre had reached the British government in September 1816, but it had done little to change Goulburn's attitude. Nothing could be got from him, and the Company was still left uncertain as to the Law Officers' opinion on the issue of jurisdiction. Then, when news of Selkirk's actions began to come through, Goulburn found himself in a stronger position, and he roundly told the Company that the question was no longer one of the conflicting claims of two mercantile companies, but of how to bring to condign punishment the perpetrators of those outrages which 'each has been desirous of imputing to the other'. There was an air of impartiality about this; and Selkirk lent colour to it, for though the capture of Fort William was less heinous than the Massacre of Seven Oaks there could be no doubt that Selkirk had been responsible, whereas there was room for claiming that the Northwesters were not involved in the Massacre.

Goulburn's dispatch to Sherbrooke of 6th February, 1817, also appeared impartial, for Sherbrooke was told to insist upon a mutual restoration of posts and property and the end of aggression and hostilities, and to ensure the free passage of furs, provisions and goods for the purpose of the fur trade without regard to the rights involved, which would have to be settled later.

Such apparent impartiality gave great advantage to the North-westerns, but the second dispatch, of 11th February, bore no such appearance. Here emphasis was placed upon the danger which arose 'from the opening which the conduct of Lord Selkirk appears calculated to give to the admission of foreign influence over the Indian nations, to the exclusion of that heretofore exercised by the subjects of Great Britain'. The danger that Selkirk might open the way to American influence was not serious. But he had acted in an arbitrary manner, and he had refused to accept arrest on the 'Drummond's Island Warrant'. Goulburn took this as a reason for presuming that he would be guilty of further defiance of legitimate authority to such an extent that special legislation against him would probably be necessary. He wrote that it was necessary to enforce respect for the law, 'especially with respect to Lord Selkirk'. This was followed by a warning that it was 'almost impossible to hope' that Selkirk would submit quietly, by orders that force should be used if necessary, and then by a demand for a report so that Parliament might decide, if he resisted arrest, 'whether the urgency of the case does not require the adoption of some special measure of severity with respect to his Lordship'.

Such animosity was indeed accompanied by a private instruction that Selkirk should be warned of the danger to which he would expose himself if he continued to resist arrest. But not only did Selkirk surrender to his warrant and offer full support for any measure which would restore tranquillity, but the Hudson's Bay Committee had also stated to Bathurst that they had sought an arrangement with the Northwesterns in 1811 and again in 1815, and were still anxious to make peace, even to the extent of relinquishing the whole of Athabaska and its trade to them. Coltman, too, though he found Selkirk obdurate over the legal question of property rights, was soon convinced by his allegations that the Northwesterns meant to use force to prevent the Athabaska expedition of 1816 from succeeding, and his apprehensions were confirmed as reports came of A. N. McLeod's use of his authority as a Justice of the Peace. Of the two counters to his mission—Selkirk's obduracy and McLeod's obstreperousness—Coltman ultimately found Selkirk's attitude the

more obstructive, for Coltman was bent on achieving a compromise and, having done their damage, the Northwesters were prepared to be sweetly reasonable, whereas Selkirk was not.

Selkirk and his advisers had always suspected Coltman, and held that he was anxious to show that both parties had been equally criminal; they had his own statement that his principal object was to effect a reconciliation, and they soon came to reckon him as the 'arch-rogue' in a society so riddled with intrigue that even the gentle Lady Selkirk was moved to protest that 'these Quebec intrigues would take in Old Nick himself I believe. An honest man can never be a match for them'. Sherbrooke did not share the Commissioner's hope that he might be able to bring the two parties to an accommodation and, in fact, he received a rebuff in February 1818 when he submitted to Selkirk proposals which the latter considered equal to compounding felonies since they entailed that further prosecutions should only be undertaken at the direction of government—a formula which William McGillivray interpreted as meaning that all criminal prosecutions should be waived.

Suspicion of Coltman, for all his affability, was warranted, for he challenged some of the main contentions of Selkirk and his party; when he made his report in May 1818 he maintained that the long lapse of time voided the Hudson Bay claim to jurisdiction at Red River, Miles Macdonell's behaviour as Governor constituted misuse of the powers even if they existed, and the position of personal control which Selkirk had achieved made all claims under the Company's Charter suspect. On the other hand, he found an even more clear case against the North West Company, with its incitement to violence based upon a species of monopoly dependent upon physical force. Yet, by virtue of not carrying his enquiry any further back, Coltman made Miles Macdonell's Pemmican Proclamation the first act of hostility and, disappointed in his efforts at reconciliation, proposed that government must take over the administration of all the Indian territories, whether they fell within the area claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company or not, and pay the costs of administration from dues levied on the fur companies to which monopolies could be granted.

This was a form of impartiality which Selkirk and his advisers took as plain indifference to their rights, and they challenged the statement that the Hudson's Bay Company had first resorted to violence, the whole concept of 'mutual aggressions', and the general conclusions of the Report. The Northwesters, on the other hand, voiced their belief that Selkirk's work, ever since 'the wily purchase of so large a part of the Hudson's Bay stock', had been 'undeviatingly

intended to produce the utter destruction of our trading concern, the ruin of our fortunes and characters, and that the active co-operation of the Hudson's Bay Company was an engine put in motion by his Lordship to assist in accomplishing those ends, ultimately thereby to raise himself upon the ruins of the North-West company into a monopoliser of the fur trade of the whole continent, in addition to his becoming lord paramount of the soil, through an immense tract of the country.'

Coltman put his finger on the spot when he reported that the Hudson's Bay Company, though combining with Selkirk to expel the North West Company from 'the Indian country', was prepared to abandon the claims under the Charter which would go directly to establish a commercial monopoly but hoped to achieve this indirectly by insisting on its claims to territorial and judicial authority.

The Company had, in actual fact, been advised that the grant of exclusive trade was invalid in law. Selkirk was aware of this advice, and the Company had tried to get from government a decision as to whether the claim to jurisdiction was admissible. After two years of waiting for a decision on this crucial point, punctuated by many reminders, the Committee reluctantly realised that they were unlikely to get a decision until Coltman had delivered his Report, and in January 1817 they were told that no opinion on this point could be expressed until the trials then pending had been settled.

So through the trials in Montreal there dragged not only the project of Coltman for effecting a compromise but also the basic problem of the Company's Charter. The Northwesters were not far wide of the mark when they asserted that Selkirk dominated the scene, for not only was he the greatest single shareholder, but Colville was the key-man on the Committee, and Colville was in constant and intimate correspondence with Jean, Lady Selkirk, his sister. And during the Canada trials Selkirk's mind hardened. Whereas in 1816 (despite his denials to Robertson) Selkirk was ready to consider a line of boundary with the Northwesters, was averse to conclude that the contest must end in the ruin of one Company or the other, and was angry that a boundary should be thought impracticable, in 1818 he was intransigent. His willingness to negotiate had, for one thing, been mis-represented; for another, a clerical error had provided him with a copy of the dispatch of 11th February, 1817, in which the partiality of Bathurst and Goulburn, and the assumption that Selkirk would need to be brought to heel, were so manifest.

So compromise became impossible. The lawyer Gale wrote to tell Lady Selkirk that the trials made it certain that the North West

Company must meet universal and permanent detestation; Parliamentary sanction could not but follow on a public opinion of such strength. Colvile, in his turn, told her that Edward Ellice and Simon McGillivray had called at the Company's office in Fenchurch Street and had proposed a joint letter to Bathurst, in which both companies should agree to restore property, should ask for the guilty to be brought to justice, and should reserve to both parties the right to redress in the courts of justice. The Hudson's Bay Committee replied that the proposal would be considered but was not likely to be accepted since the Hudson's Bay Company had captured no property and had already asked for justice. But there was in the Northwesters a vein of bravado which mingled with a genuine reluctance to believe that the Hudson's Bay Committee had emerged to fight to a finish, and the agents pressed on with their proposals and negotiations with every appearance of confidence. So although lawyer Gale felt convinced that the proposals 'will not answer' and Selkirk thought it would be disgraceful to enter into any terms with them, the Northwesters came again in February 1818 with proposals that they should give up Red River to the settlers in return for a free hand in the trade of Athabaska—proposals which Selkirk denied with the hope that the Company would never make a compromise 'with those who under the pretence of trade, participate in the gains of systematic villainy'. By this time his suspicion had grown to an extent at which he even rejected arbitration by merchants; he wanted men of professional integrity.

News of events in Athabaska had begun to come through, to loosen these frozen negotiations. The Northwesters, knowing of Clarke's failure in Peace River in 1815-16 and of Justice A. N. McLeod's successful policy against the 1816-17 expedition, blandly alleged that the Hudson's Bay Company might well give up Athabaska since, with the loss of many thousands of pounds, they had not yet got a footing there. But the iniquity of McLeod's abuse of his judicial powers hardened Selkirk's heart, and the Hudson's Bay Committee made his conduct the basis of a strong appeal to the Colonial Office. Government might well consider a settlement as the most easy way of getting rid of the whole business, but the Company was urging the view that although Athabaska did not lie within the lands granted by the Charter, yet the Company's servants had as much legal right to trade there as the Northwesters and should enjoy the rights of every British subject there—in particular the right to protection and to trial by due course of law according to the terms of the Prince Regent's Proclamation of May 1817.

The Company was prepared to accept a legal and constitutional settlement if one could be got. The Governor asked to be told the opinions of the Law Officers of the Crown on the Company's powers, he reminded Lord Bathurst of the many requests for government protection, and he estimated the Company's losses from the delays and evasions at between £40,000 and £50,000. So far from satisfactory did the Prince Regent's Proclamation appear that Berens protested against the implication that the two companies were equally guilty of riots, murders and rescues from arrest and warned that the Northwesters were boasting that the proclamation ensured them forgiveness for past crimes and had been issued at their suggestion. He suggested that the only satisfactory solution would be for Parliament to lay down the boundaries within which the Company's chartered privileges were valid and he proposed that the Company should petition Parliament for relief—a procedure which would at least ensure that evidence would be impartially collected.

The appeal from the administrators of the Colonial Office to the tribunal of Parliament had, in the end, to be accepted, and it resulted in the Blue Book of 1819. But for the moment Berens quite failed to penetrate Goulburn's defences. The Under-Secretary tersely acknowledged the Governor's complaints of delays and injustice, without comment. He then added that 'if the tone and temper of the instructions given by the Hudson's Bay Company to their Agents in North America should unfortunately correspond with that of the statement which I have now to acknowledge His Lordship cannot but apprehend that the conduct of those Agents may be very different from that which the Commissioners had reason to anticipate'. Berens vigorously rebutted the suggestion, but yet it seemed the Company would have to vindicate its own rights, and Williams made it seem that he had determined to do so.

After his *coup* at the Grand Rapid, Williams had done his rugged best to carry out the Committee's instructions that, despite the havoc wrought by the Athabaska Justice and the poor display by Decoigne, it was 'of the most essential consequence to the prosperity of the Company that we should succeed in this attempt to procure a share of the Athabaska Trade'. Robertson's winter in the privy at Fort Wedderburn had undoubtedly done great things, and his escape at Cumberland had left Williams a magnificent chance to show the Indians of Athabaska that all the bravado of the North West bullies would not keep the Hudson's Bay men out of the country. The Committee, by 1819, were aware of Robertson's extravagance and were warning that lavish expenditure of goods would not gain the objec-

tive, while Robertson himself received counsels advising 'discretion and judgment'. Yet Williams was left the option to employ Robertson again if he wished, and it would have been a great error in psychology if he had not taken the chance to send him back to Athabaska again, to impress the Indians with the impotence of his enemies and with the Company's power to fulfil its promises.

Between them Williams and Robertson had more in mind than the mere maintenance of the posts in Athabaska. The key post at Ile-à-la-Crosse was to be put under John Clarke, whose winter at Dunvegan had done much to re-establish his character. Robertson was afraid he might himself be forced to winter at Fort Wedderburn but hoped that, once he had shown himself, he might be able to leave Alexander McDonald in command there and go on to Peace River. In this his purpose was to forward the plan, already discussed with Clarke in 1818, to push on from Peace River and open up trade across the Rockies in New Caledonia, the region of the Stuart and Upper Fraser Rivers. Mackenzie River also was to see the Company pushing forward in rivalry, and while Great Slave Lake, with its outpost at Mountain Island, was to be maintained, another outpost was to be built at Hay River, Great Slave Lake. From Fort Wedderburn posts at Harrison's House, at Fond du Lac at the eastern end of Lake Athabaska and Beren's House at Pierre au Calumet on Athabaska River, were planned and started. Robertson was planning expansion. 'We have gained a complete footing in Athabaska', he wrote, 'and from the arrangements I have made, a similar fate hovers over Isle olo Crosse the last ridout of North west power and influence. My next attempt will be New Caledonia and McKenzie's River.' From those two establishments, he alleged, came more than half the furs which the Northwesters brought out through Athabaska, and he meant to challenge them there.

Robertson had little difficulty in talking William Williams into his views, for the Governor had as yet but little knowledge of the country. But the Governor also knew little of the distinctions drawn between the old servants of the Company and Robertson's new Canadian recruits, or of the reluctance of the 'snug traders' to support expansive ventures; such knowledge as he had came from his intercourse with the old servants and he showed 'a decided preference in favour of the snug business'. Perhaps another year might give him more enlarged and liberal views; in the meantime Robertson, plagued by opposition and reluctance and by the ineffective officers whom Williams had given him, found the Northwesters in Athabaska subdued and amicable, and talking hopefully of a

'junction' once more. He and his men, and John Clarke at Ile-à-la-Crosse, carried all before them in 1819-20, and found Indians anxious to trade at the Company's posts.

When, on 16th October, 1819, Robertson arrived at the post at St. Mary's, Peace River, he found that both there and at Colville House (the outpost at the junction of Peace River and Loon River which Clarke had established in 1818) there were more Indians than he could equip; some would have to be allowed to go back to the Northwesters to trade. But although Clarke had achieved so much in Peace River he had done little towards crossing the mountains, and Robertson found that for the North West Company Haldane and 'that vagabond Ogden' had gone across the mountains, and he presumed that Black would follow them. John Haldane was a respectable partner of the rival company, who had come to it from the XY Company; but Peter Skene Ogden, son of Judge Isaac Ogden, had shown by his conduct at Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1818 that he was one of the young Northwesters who were prepared to go great lengths in the struggle, and he later proved that his courage and purposefulness made him a formidable opponent. To the Hudson's Bay men he was 'that murderer Ogden', accused of holding a Hudson's Bay Indian in the water and then shooting him at Green Lake in 1816, and of leading the bitter rivalry at Ile-à-la-Crosse, where the Company's post and goods had been captured under warrant in 1817 and where the Company's men had been completely encircled and terrified in 1818. Black surpassed even Ogden; he had earned himself a reputation as the most outrageous of the North West bullies since he had first appeared at Ile-à-la-Crosse to intimidate Peter Fidler in 1810, he had been a prime agent in the fracas at Ile-à-la-Crosse which resulted in the death of James Johnston, he had been involved with Ogden in the capture of the post at Green Lake in 1816, and he had been well to the fore in the persecution of Clarke and his officers and then in the capture of Robertson at Athabaska Lake. He was convinced that the Northwesters in Athabaska needed firm leadership, and while the partners were wondering to what lengths his antagonism would carry him, he was writing in to say that he would not bind himself to the absolute commands of any man. Black found that the re-appearance of Robertson and Clarke in 1818 had 'play'd the duce' with the North West prestige in Athabaska and, though it probably worried him but little, he reported that they had armed the Indians and were threatening that they would 'get his brains blown out'.

It was a sure sign of the changing times that the Northwesters

should want to send two such men as Ogden and Black away from the troubled area of Athabaska, over the mountains to where they could not provoke further incidents. Equally indicative was the willingness of two such men to take themselves away out of the area of conflicts and reprisals; and here Robertson's experience told in his favour, for during the previous winter he had discussed with Black the latter's conviction that, if the campaign should fail, he could always escape from justice by crossing the mountains and then taking ship for China. The Hudson's Bay Company agents had already sent in an account of Black's capture of Robertson, saying there could be little doubt that murder was intended and asking for troops to be sent to arrest Black—a suggestion which the Colonial Office countered by the astonishing and unconvincing proposal of calling upon 'some of the respectable partners of the North West Company for their assistance and co-operation'.

The desperate state of the extremists, and a fear that their principals might not be able, or willing, to stand between them and retribution, would explain their crossing of the mountains; and Robertson's determination to follow them shows the winning vein of the English company. During his winter of 1818-19 John Clarke had found enough to do in taking Fort Vermilion and attacking the trade of Fort Dunvegan. He had, however, sent a small party of Iroquois across the mountains to prepare the Indians of New Caledonia for trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. The original intention had been to send the French Canadian Ignace Giasson in command of the party, for he had brought the Iroquois down to trade at St. Mary's in 1818. But Giasson remained at St. Mary's when the expedition set off in February 1819, and he was still there when it returned in May of that year, having sent five of the party over into New Caledonia. Robertson fell in with the general plan, and though it was known that dressed leather was the chief commodity for trade in New Caledonia (as it remained for many years) and this was a commodity which the Company had not yet organised, he sent Giasson to the foot of the Rockies to meet a band of Iroquois. This move failed, for though the Iroquois waited several days in the hope of meeting him, Giasson missed them and they took their furs—twenty-four packs of prime beaver—to the North West post. Yet Robertson was determined to pit Giasson against Ogden and Black, and to challenge the Northwesters in New Caledonia. He re-engaged him at the end of the year and sent him off with a small party for Smoky River. They crossed the mountains in the spring of 1820, though the Northwesters could scarcely credit it. They had neither

men nor goods to counteract such a move, and Giasson and his party remained on the western slopes till late in September, traded all the furs they had goods for and were obliged to leave some with the Indians and others *en cache*, and returned all dressed in *coat* beaver and with news that beaver must be very plentiful in New Caledonia.

By the time that Giasson got back to St. Mary's, in October 1820, Robertson had already set out for Canada. He had received an encouraging report from Giasson, and his other posts had managed so well that even Robertson was convinced that Athabaska could begin retrenchment. He ruefully admitted that he had been too short of goods to attempt to establish Mackenzie River. Nor had he been able to start his proposed post at Hay River, Great Slave Lake; nor an additional post, Fort de Pinette, in Peace River. And from Pierre au Calumet (Beren's House, Athabaska River) came the news that Aulay McAulay had been forced to surrender his trade goods to John Stuart of the North West Company in return for subsistence. Even at St. Mary's, where a good summer hunt had laid up a plentiful supply of food, Robertson had passed a miserable winter for provisions, and lack of management and improvidence were already becoming marked features of the régime of the Company in Athabaska.

It is only fair to note that Robertson's correspondence at this time is full of comment on these features; he exhorted the New Caledonia expedition to be most careful to provide itself with food, he deplored in advance the decision to draw in pemmican from Pierre au Calumet to Fort Wedderburn, and he ordered John Clarke to fetch provisions up from Cumberland. He planned, too, to cut establishments as soon as the opposition would permit, and to replace costly Canadians with old servants of the Company and with Orkney fishermen. But whereas he really had brought the Chipewyans to throw off the North West yoke, these plans and economies remained on paper only.

At Fort Wedderburn Alexander McDonald proved a great disappointment; he quarrelled with officers and servants alike, withdrew to his room, neglected the trade in furs, spoiled the Indians in order to get meat from them and 'made sad work' at the chief post. But apart from Fort Wedderburn and Pierre au Calumet the Company had driven a good trade. The ebullient Robertson had hoped for a hundred packs of furs (each weighing eighty-five pounds) from the Athabaska Department. He got only forty, but that was a considerable increase and the sufferings of his opponents were ample payment for any loss. The whole atmosphere had changed: the

Northwesters were short of food, short of goods and afraid of the rising independence of the Chipewyans. Moreover, Montreal warrants for the arrest of Black, Soucisse and other bullies, had been sent up to Athabaska, with a properly sworn constable to execute them, and in the early summer four of them were arrested though Black escaped.

The contest was still active to the extent that Robertson regretted the need to spare a good interpreter for the service of the Arctic Discovery Expedition which Captain Franklin of the British Navy had brought up to Lake Athabaska in 1820; but open hostilities had only just ceased, and Robertson had picked up and passed on a warning that the Northwesters intended to arrest William Williams during the summer. 'Our opponents are either totally disconcerted, and find the Game up, or they are meditating some grand "Coup de main", there is nothing but expresses flying in all quarters; altho' I am of opinion that their finances will not admit of any extensive plan for our destruction.' His sanguine mood was tempered with caution, and he was stirred by 'dreadful forbodings of a junction' in which the Committee would act in ignorance of the great victory gained (but yet to be consolidated) in Athabaska.

Some of Robertson's misgivings were substantiated as he made his way out in spring 1820, hoping to be able to return to England and settle his affairs there. At Ile-à-la-Crosse John Clarke had utterly neglected the task of bringing in pemmican from Cumberland and Carlton, so that the outgoing brigades could not be provisioned for their journey, and although Robertson found plentiful food at Cumberland he also found that Governor Williams and a strong party had taken the boats available and gone 'galloping off' to Norway House, leaving Robertson and his canoes alone to run the gauntlet of any ambushes on the Saskatchewan. To a man like Robertson such action was made all the more galling by the fact that Williams had left him copies of the Counsel's Opinion which the Company had taken; even a couple of boats to run the rapids in safety would have been more welcome! Especially since Messrs. Scarlett and Chitty, the learned jurisconsults, advised that Williams had acted by virtue of warrants which were not valid for the offences alleged, that Canadian courts (whose methods Robertson knew only too well) might prove to have authority in Rupert's Land, and that Williams would be ill-advised to resist a warrant arresting him for his capture of the North West partners at the Grand Rapid. For Williams, evasion of this warrant was the obvious course, and instead of taking the normal route down the Saskatchewan, past the

danger-point of the Grand Rapid and so to Lake Winnipeg and Norway House, he slipped off northwards through Moose Lake, over a portage to Minago River and so to Cross Lake, Nelson River and the Rock Depot. This was the route used by Kelsey, Henday, Cocking and the early Hudson's Bay explorers, and though it was almost forgotten in 1820 it served William's turn. He advised Robertson to use it also, and the latter tried to find out about the route when he got to Moose Lake. But George Flett, in command of the Company's small post at Moose Lake, did not know the route, and the guide whom Williams had promised to leave there could not be found.

Full of misgivings, therefore, Robertson found himself forced, by the kind of inefficiency with which he always seemed to be surrounded, to use the main route by the Grand Rapid. At Cedar Lake he re-arranged his papers and gave his instructions to Robert Miles, an able and business-like young man who had kept the accounts of Athabaska. He seemed almost resigned to being taken, but he sent Alexander McDonald ahead to spring any trap which might be set. It was therefore the more astonishing that at the Grand Rapid Robertson should have walked straight into the sort of ambush which he had himself envisaged and, after a brief and ineffective scuffle, should have been made prisoner by Henry McKenzie, the North West Agent. Robert Miles escaped with the Company's papers and accounts, but Robertson, protesting volubly, seems to have made no attempt to get away. The ease with which he was taken roused suspicions that he welcomed the chance of a direct passage to Montreal so that he might proceed to England on his own affairs. There is no evidence for such a charge; more probably the ambush was directed so purposefully at Robertson that he realised that he had little chance once he had got as far as the Grand Rapid. For he soon discovered that although there was an indictment sworn against him at Montreal he had been arrested without a warrant and that the object was to undermine the Company's trade at Ile-à-la-Crosse and in Athabaska so that the Committee might be forced to accept the terms to which negotiations between the two Companies had been reduced. He was, indeed, offered his freedom if he would promise not to return to Athabaska for a year.

For the North West Company the struggle had reached a desperate state by the summer of 1820. Hanging over them was the fact that their Agreement would run out in 1821 and the Co-partnership, as it stood, must dissolve. Added point was given to this by increasing evidence of a split within the Company. Many were

averse from the strong-arm practices of Black, Ogden, Soucisse and the bullies, and even the plausible methods of A. N. McLeod the 'Athabaska Justice' had roused fearful comment. The differences between the Agents and some of the more clear-minded and purposeful Wintering Partners were taking an edge as the Agreement drew to its close. Robertson had long been aware of the winterers' schism, and he soon knew that his own capture had made the rift wider since John McLoughlin, whom he had always named as the chief winterer who would have the courage and conviction to stand out for his views, had opposed the idea strongly. The winterers, he reported, wanted economy in place of wanton expenditure and were convinced that no good had been derived from the violent measures; even the Indians laughed at them. The violent party had carried the day because McGillivray had assured the partners that a union was imminent and that success in Athabaska was essential to get good terms.

Outward unity was preserved in the North West Company as it met at Fort William in the summer of 1820, and the North West brigade went back to Athabaska to carry on the contest, because the company was so deeply committed, and because William McGillivray was so dominating a personality. An agreed course was also possible because the two leading 'rebels', Angus Bethune and John McLoughlin, were due for a year's leave of absence. But, although success in Athabaska was accepted as the point upon which all would turn, it was clear that the Hudson's Bay Company was by no means beaten from the field, for while the Northwesters were assembled there passed by an express canoe carrying north the new Hudson's Bay commander for that troubled area, George Simpson.

It would have required great discernment for the hardened fur traders to have seen any great threat to their Company in Simpson at that time, for though he was to develop into the most effective and competent personality whom the Hudson's Bay Company ever brought to the fur trade, he was in 1820 an utter novice. His father, eldest son of the minister of the parish of Avoch, Morayshire, had begotten him out of wedlock. Of his mother nothing is known save that she bore her son in the remote parish of Loch Broom, probably in 1786; but even the date is uncertain. As a child George Simpson was taken by his kindly grand-parents to live in the manse at Avoch, and there he grew up, youngest of a family of eight, happy and lively, the special care of his young aunt Mary Simpson, and with no sense of the inferiority which his birth might well have stamped upon him. Mary left Avoch for the small borough of Dingwall when

in 1807 she married Alexander Simpson, the schoolmaster there. Possibly George went with her to the dominie's house, but he would be past school-age by then and may well have gone from Avoch to London. At Avoch the parish school education which he had received left him thoroughly grounded in the basic disciplines of writing (a good clerkly copy-book hand), book-keeping, grammar and arithmetic. Some little Latin he may have had too, but there is small evidence of it. It was slender enough equipment for a career, but character and determination were sturdily developed; and the mixture of character and clannishness which in those days made the Scots such notable contributors to overseas development was strongly brought out by Simpson's career and circumstances. At Dingwall the schoolmaster's family included the son of his first marriage, Æmilius Simpson who later became a captain in the Hudson's Bay Company's naval service; it also included Mary's son Thomas Simpson, later the Polar explorer, and her second son Alexander who also took service with the Company. Moreover, when George went to London round about 1807 he did not move out of the family sphere, for he went as a clerk into the employment of his uncle Geddes Mackenzie Simpson.

Simpson's father seems to have lived his life out in the remote village of Loch Broom. But his brother Geddes Mackenzie had made a successful business career for himself in London. He was by 1809 a partner in the sugar-broking firm of Graham and Simpson which had just removed from Mincing Lane to 73 Tower Street. Near at hand in Leadenhall was the firm of Wedderburn and Company, engaged like Graham and Simpson in broking West Indian sugars and managed in part by that Andrew Wedderburn whose sister Jean became Lady Selkirk and who himself became the dominating personality of the Hudson's Bay Committee. The two firms coalesced as Graham, Simpson and Wedderburn, still at 73 Tower Street, in 1812, and the young clerk George must have seen a considerable amount of the active and calculating partner Andrew Wedderburn, who became Andrew Colville in 1814. The single letter that remains from George Simpson during his twelve years as a sugar-broker's clerk shows him as a cheerful, sociable young man. But he had clearly attracted attention, for when in 1820, in the midst of his negotiations with the Northwesters, Andrew Colville completely reshuffled his sugar-broking interests, Simpson emerged from the shuffle as Governor-in-Chief *Locum Tenens* of the Hudson's Bay Company at a salary of £600 a year, or £400 if he returned within the year. The house of Graham, Simpson and Wedderburn, was

bought out for the very considerable sum of £70,000 and Simpson's uncle Geddes started the firm of Simpson, Scott and Company, while the nephew, then about thirty-three years old, was welcomed by his new employers in a way which might well have turned his head had he known the terms used.

'I have long known him', wrote Andrew Colvile, 'and have perfect confidence in his honor and discretion in case you should desire to have any confidential communication with him; he is active and intelligent with sufficient promptness and determination'. The more official letter from the Governor and Committee to William Williams told him that the unknown clerk had been given a commission as Governor-in-Chief in case Williams himself should be absent from the country, and that 'we have perfect Confidence in Mr. Simpson's honor and integrity and from his general knowledge of Business and the information which he has been able to acquire here of the Company's affairs we think he will not find much difficulty in making the general arrangements for the trade, provided he receives the candid and ready assistance of our Chief factors and other traders'.

There was, in 1820, a very fair chance that the Bench Warrants which were out against William Williams might drag him away from the Company's territories, or even that he might accept the opinions of the Company's own solicitors and present himself for trial in England. In that case Simpson was to take command, and Selkirk's declining days were comforted by the thought that 'The affairs of the H.B. it is to be hoped may be perfectly well attended to in the absence of Govr. Williams by Mr. Simpson who appears to be intelligent and active in business, as well as of a character likely to conciliate many of the contending parties in that country and who I believe will be careful not to expose himself by personally acting in any matter of which the execution may be left to others.'

At five days' notice Simpson had to leave England early in March 1820. He was to travel by way of New York, Lake Huron, Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg to Hudson Bay, then perhaps to Athabaska, Slave Lake and perhaps even to Coppermine (if Robertson's plan should develop and Simpson should get so far); or—again perhaps—he might return by the ships of that year, his mission accomplished and the emergency over. If Williams remained free and in command he was to make the best possible use of Simpson, and the chances were that Athabaska would be the field in which the newcomer would be employed. A fellow-passenger with the Northwesters John George McTavish, he must have exercised some reticence on the voyage. But he bore a copy of Bathurst's dispatch

bidding the Northwesters keep the peace, which he was to deliver at Fort William, and his letters reveal a brash and cocky young man who roundly told some Americans on board of his 'contempt for their weakness, vanity and arrogance and assured them that John Bull merely wanted the opportunity to chastise them for their presumption and insolence', while he sent two 'Vile Radicals' to Coventry on the voyage 'not only by threats but actual hard thumps'.

At Montreal Simpson enjoyed to the full the social life of the fur-trade capital, and delighted in the consequence attaching to the representative of Lord Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company. He also began to get some notion of the weight of trouble which lay between the two companies, to anticipate some hard blows, to wonder if he might not be obstructed on his journey, and to assess the North West Company as 'a band of un-principled Lawless Maraunders' who would stick at nothing however desperate. With a novice's bravado which later proved to be based on real courage he told his friends that though he was not paid for fighting and would keep his bones whole if possible, yet he was armed to the teeth, and would sell his life as dear as possible 'and never allow a North-Wester come within reach of my Riffle if Flint Steel and Bullet can keep him off'.

So the pawky little bantam (for Simpson was short if sturdy) went inland, delivering Bathurst's dispatch to the assembly of the Northwesters which was met at Fort William to debate the renewal of the partnership and the capture of William Williams and Colin Robertson. He was travelling with Alexander Macdonell, later to be Governor of the settlement, and at Fort William he learned of the strong North West party which had gone, complete with an alleged constable, to waylay the Hudson's Bay men at Grand Rapid. At one stage it looked as though Simpson might be instrumental in bringing the struggle to a climax, for Moffatt in Montreal thought to entrust him with a letter to McLoughlin telling him that the Hudson's Bay Committee would welcome an approach from the winterers. But finding that some North West canoes were going up, Moffatt used them for the momentous message and Simpson was merely told to tell McLoughlin that the packet had been sent by a North West canoe—the first meeting, and perhaps the first clash, between the suave and efficient Simpson and the gaunt and intractable winterer.

From Fort William Simpson journeyed on past the settlement and Norway House to Rock Depot, where he met Governor Williams who had come down safely from Cumberland, and where he learned

that Colin Robertson had been captured and that Athabaska was without a Chief. Simpson had spent much time in Montreal persuading Samuel Gale that he should advise Williams to return to England and stand trial. But since no warrant had yet been served on Williams there was no reason why he should leave his command, and since Robertson had been captured, and escaped to America and England, there would have been no-one to give effective advice to the completely untried Simpson, and Williams stayed on. Simpson (very much in Mr. Colvile's confidence) explained the London, Montreal and Fort William situation to the Governor, and delivered to him a copy of Lord Bathurst's dispatch, while Williams explained 'all confidential matters' to Simpson and required him to stay in the country.

To this Simpson readily assented. There was a real love of travel and adventure in the little man, with his blue eyes and fair hair, and even as a complete greenhorn he could not be overlooked. Robertson, in New York, soon learned of the way in which the newcomer had been imposed upon, and sent back to Athabaska with many notoriously inefficient and costly servants; but he thought his arrival a fortunate event all the same, for it meant that the Athabaska project continued. It meant much more than that, for Simpson was to leave a mark upon the Canadian fur trade such as no other man has ever equalled. The development of the 'Little Emperor's' magnificent powers of organisation and command lay in the future in 1820; immediately to the point was the fact that he was not only instructed to organise the Athabaska posts but also to forward the New Caledonia expedition, to establish Mackenzie River and to co-ordinate Peace River with the other posts by making it the supply depot for canoes. This would make Athabaska a more self-contained department, less dependent on Cumberland, and Simpson was also instructed to improve the lengthy road over the Height of Land at Portage la Loche (Methy Portage).

It is to be presumed that Governor Williams had explained the vital need for a show of success in Athabaska when he persuaded Simpson to stay on in Rupert's Land. Simpson's earlier conversations with Colvile would probable have given him less sense of the importance of that district than Colin Robertson would have thought proper; but the latter took courage when Colvile spoke to him of Simpson as 'a man that would act with spirit, if an occasion offered', for he felt that John Clarke could be relied upon at Ile-à-la-Crosse, and so the strategic centres were secure. The event justified Colvile rather than Robertson, for Simpson proved not only his

determination but his shrewd perception during his first winter in the interior.

From the day (30th July, 1820) on which he left Rock Depot his Journal is a model of lucid exposition and clear insight. In the early days it was probably not entirely his own composition, for Robert Miles, the admirable clerk who had kept the Athabaska Journals under Colin Robertson, was with him. Miles has left an unfinished Journal which is in many places, word for word, the same as that which Simpson signed—and whether the master dictated to the clerk and later amended the draft, or whether the clerk himself made a rough draft which the master adopted and amended, the result was the same. Simpson certainly used Robert Miles to draw up his Journal and Report; and in so doing he certainly did not disdain to draw upon the clerk's knowledge and experience. It would, indeed, have been strangely out of character if he had done so, for throughout his career one of his strongest assets was his ability to accept the experience of others, to analyse their views, strip them of their personal bias, correlate them with other factors, and present them as an integrated and balanced policy.

Since Miles travelled in the same canoe as Simpson the journey must have been largely taken up with the experienced clerk's views and information. So by the time Simpson arrived at Fort Wedderburn on 20th September he had a shrewd grasp of the problems facing him and was fully alive to Robertson's views on the importance of Athabaska and the need to expand from that key-position into New Caledonia and Mackenzie River.

Still a 'mange du lard', a novice to the north-west, as he confessed himself, Simpson had much to contribute. He was the first officer whom the Company had ever brought into its posts with a proper business training behind him, and the impact of his counting-house mentality upon the situation created by such men as Robertson, Bird, Williams and Clarke, was immediate and electrifying. He had soon thrown aside his early acceptance of Clarke and had discerned that 'He does not seem to take a general view of the Company's Interests, but confines his attention to the District which he individually superintends'. The use of light canoes, manned by smart Canadians, merely to carry the officers and their families, at the expense of transport for trade-goods, soon drew his caustic comments, as did the passion for liquor which held up the brigade for days on end while every man in the camp was 'more or less intoxicated', the general insubordination, and the crazy state of the canoes and equipment. All this, and the less personal problems involved in careful

indents for goods and careful selection and preparation of the outfits, he had assessed and commented upon before he left Norway House.

Along with a shrewd and uncompromising assessment of the situation went a measure of courage and determination which the Company were exceedingly lucky to find in a man with so much commercial training and habit of mind. He left for Athabaska determined to act as circumstances dictated, anxious to avoid collisions with the Northwesters but to 'maintain the rights and interests of the Honble Company, and defend their property and our persons' by every means within his power. Fearing an ambush at the Grand Rapid, he issued each of his men (he had sixty-eight in twelve canoes) with a musket, a bayonet and ten rounds of ball cartridge.

By the time he left Cumberland, Simpson had decided that Clarke would sacrifice the Company and all its interests to his own incorrigible vanity—he had left the cargo of one canoe at Cumberland in order to make a light canoe for his 'Indian mistress' and her servant—but had decided not to quarrel with him yet awhile; and at Frog Portage he began to shew a real capacity for understanding the mechanics of the fur trade. Here he came to the point at which access to Athabaska was possible either by way of Cumberland, the Saskatchewan, Lake Winnipeg, Norway House, Knee Lake, Hayes River and the Rock Depot to York Factory, or by way of the Churchill (English) River, the Burntwood carrying-place, Split Lake and Nelson River to York. He had himself come inland by the longer route, for the early obsession with the Nelson River and Burntwood route which had derived from the days of Philip Turnor and David Thompson had been worn out in the early years of the century; the season of open water was in fact too short for the route to be practicable for normal transport. Simpson was not yet sufficiently aware of the Company's history to know the background of the story, and he weighed up the problem, as he saw it, from the false information that the Burntwood was 'less intricate'. Allowing for that, he showed a penetrating flair for the trade, knitting together in one reasoned plan the organisation of a depot at York, the provision of food for the journey, the use of boats and canoes for different stages of the river, of horses and carts for the portages, and of men and posts within the over-all plan. Based upon a novice's ignorance of the southern detour's advantage in the longer period of open water, the plan proved unworkable in normal weather conditions; but it showed the enthusiasm and capacity of the new arrival.

His first winter in the Company's service gave Simpson invaluable

experience and—equally important for a man coming fresh to the fur trade—a chance to show his mettle. He had decided that the time was not yet ripe to put Clarke in his place, but even on his journey inland he was already telling that self-sufficient character (who was taking uncommon pains to convince the Indians that Colin Robertson was a very secondary person to himself) that the Company's business must not be neglected out of personal pique. Pausing to give his men a chance to wash and change their clothes, so that he might arrive at his command-post 'in good feather', he reached Fort Wedderburn in complete control of the situation, and wasted no time, and few words, in committing his views to paper. The central post had been well managed during the summer but was short of provisions; Peace River was in a disappointing state owing to laxity and insubordination; Black and the leading 'Outlaws and Felons' of the North West Company had gone across the Rockies.

Discipline was immediately tightened up by reprimands and fines, and talk of desertion to the North West post was firmly met by a promise of hand-cuffs and short allowance. 'An example must be made of some of these people, otherways they will have things entirely their own way', wrote Simpson on his second day at Fort Wedderburn. 'Æconomy' was to be the watchword instead of extravagance, the North West watch-house was to be answered by a similar building close to their own stockades, and the '*mangeur de larde*' showed no hesitation or doubt as he took over his troublesome department. He 'made a speech in great form to the Indians' and set about organising his posts in a series of Instructions which showed his innate ability to 'manage' the human susceptibilities of those among whom his lot was cast. The assurance and mastery were always there, but his letters ranged in tone from the curt 'This will be handed to you by Mr. Finlayson, to whom you will be pleased to deliver up the charge of the Peace River District', through 'the Govr. in Chief has thought proper to appoint me to the charge of the Athabaska Department, he might no doubt have found many Gentlemen of experience in the country better qualified for the duties of the Office, I cannot however learn earlier'. At his most complaisant Simpson wrote to Robert McVicar at Great Slave Lake that 'Your intimate knowledge of the Trade, Natives, and general arrangements of your District renders it unnecessary for me to draw out a string of formal instructions'. Duncan Finlayson was equally favoured as he went to take over Peace River District. So Simpson gave only a few hints; but Simpson's hints were not to be ignored, they included the broad warning that his correspondent's talents would be estimated

solely by the amount of beaver which he got, and a veto on a journey to Scotland.

The suavity with which he commanded his own officers, and the firmness with which he disciplined his men, were matched by Simpson's treatment of the Northwesters. They were chastened and anxious. Not only were they aware of the delicate state of negotiations in London but they also knew (as did Simpson) that their Columbia canoes had been attacked by Indians and several of their people killed. Their Indians were restive and ready to desert, and the Hudson's Bay failure to establish New Caledonia and Mackenzie River was negligible alongside the Northwesters' failures, for this was merely the postponement of projects which Simpson fully intended to implement whereas the Northwesters' failures were those of men who were faltering at the end of a race.

In command at Fort Chipewyan Simpson had the partner George Keith, whom Colin Robertson had assessed as one of the partners who could see the end in sight, but who had nevertheless taken a prominent part in the affair at the Grand Rapid. Under Keith was the clerk, Simon McGillivray, Junior, who had played a full and active part in the previous hostilities on Athabaska Lake. Both partner and clerk were subdued; but soon McGillivray and a party of bullies took up their abode at Black's old quarters, the watch-house close to the Company's stockades, and Simpson began to suspect a plot and, in defiance of McGillivray and his bullies, he ran up a stockade to prevent the watch-house occupants from spying upon the Hudson's Bay men. Discourtesies and interferences continued despite Simpson's firm stand and when, a couple of days later, McGillivray began to construct a bastion within the Hudson's Bay boundary, Simpson discovered that he had at hand in Amable Grignon (a 'clerk' who could neither read nor write) a constable of the District of Montreal with a warrant for the arrest of McGillivray. Punctiliously—over punctiliously, with his tongue in his cheek and speaking through interpreters, for the record—Simpson told the constable that he would assist if called upon for help in the King's name but that he could not in any way interfere with Grignon's doing his duty as a constable. So, having eaten a good breakfast, the astonishing little man armed himself with his pistols and with his double-barrelled gun loaded with ball and, accompanied by about half-a-dozen men, stepped down to the bastion and asked McGillivray to 'have some further conversation' on the subject of the boundary line. Before the Northwester could reply the constable 'arrested him in the King's name' and with the help of a couple of Hudson's

Bay men 'collered' him and bundled him into Fort Wedderburn. Simpson stayed to face out the other Northwesters and then returned to his own post to explain to the raging prisoner that the constable had acted on his own responsibility.

Simpson kept up this pretence in his subsequent correspondence, but he knew well that it was possibly Simon McGillivray, Senior, who was named in the constable's warrant, and the warrant had been sent inland by William Williams. He could not resist the sardonic touch of offering to go bail for McGillivray if he would deliver up the same amount of goods as the Northwesters had taken from John Clarke. The arrest was, as Simpson knew, a most effective move in the struggle for the loyalty (and for the furs) of the Chipewyans, and though alarms continued, and the prisoner escaped despite his parole after about a month in custody, the moral effect remained. The 'capturing business' was not only at an end, it had been reversed. For the moment Simpson was unctuous in his explanations that he had no part in McGillivray's arrest, but he built an outpost to Fort Wedderburn and kept sentries there with fixed bayonets and loaded muskets in case of reprisals, and when he began to fear for the expedition which Robertson had sent across the Rockies he propounded a plan for assembling a joint force from Athabaska, Ile-à-la-Crosse, Churchill, Cumberland, Red River and York, and capturing the complete North West brigade as it took out the furs. It was almost a fantastic bravado with which the counting-house clerk 'volunteered his poor abilities' to command such a force, suggested Frog Portage as the site for the ambush, and acclaimed the Split Lake and Nelson River as the best route thence to York. 'The Waters of Portage Fort du Trait abound with fine Sturgeon, and a few weeks short allowance for ourselves is nothing in a case of emergency' wrote the ebullient little optimist.

But there was much more than ebullience in the man. He really had a fine courage, both to plan and to act; ever sanguine, he brought confidence and created despair, and his 'Star' had spread from one end of Athabaska to the other. He knew, too, that 'A little flattery and good humour properly timed will mollify the most obdurate and stubborn Canadian or half-breed in the service and secure his attachment', and he acquired quite a reputation by allaying the storms caused by the unimaginative correctness of William Brown, the uncompromising master of Fort Wedderburn. He was ready to go to great lengths to secure competent and attached servants; little escaped his notice, and he placed the interests of the Company above those of the individuals concerned, even to the point of trickery. He

took full advantage of a petty theft of tea and flour to ensure that Chastellaine the Indian trader and Glasgow the cook (a negro, it is interesting to note) should remain in the service on his terms, he set out a policy for dealing with the Canadian half-breeds on whom Robertson had counted so heavily—the ‘half-gentry’ or ‘Mongrels’ were reduced to ‘a tolerable state of subordination’—and if necessary he was prepared to pay good money to get the right men. ‘With regard to Salary I must leave it in a great measure to your own discretion’, he wrote to Charles Thomas, whom he needed in Peace River, ‘an advance of £25 I will cheerfully give but if you have determined on remaining on no other condition than that it should be augmented to £150 I have no alternative, as we cannot part with your valuable services at present . . . pray do not give the censorious an opportunity of saying that you drove a hard bargain with me’. With Lamallice the guide, another of the half-gentry, and his numerous family, he maintained an uneasy working arrangement until the Indians had traded their furs. But he was resolved to purge the ‘nest of vipers’ as soon as their power of harming the trade was past, and determined that Lamallice’s peculations should ‘rise in judgement against him at the Depot’. So when the furs were safely housed he brought the Canadian to submission and greatly enhanced his own credit.

Not all of Simpson’s troubles came from such men. He had with him Jonas Oxley, a half-pay lieutenant of the 3rd West India Regiment, recruited to the Company in 1819 as a man dependable in a crisis. Simpson’s opinion of Oxley sank lower and lower as the winter wore on and he found that Oxley had more stomach for fighting than for starving. He designed to send him on the expedition across the Rockies which he was constantly planning, and when Oxley spoke largely of his contract, of his friendship with several members of the Committee, and of his wish to retire, Simpson demanded to see his contract, made a mock of his illiterate letters, snubbed his expostulations, treated his challenge to a duel with ‘sovereign contempt’ as an ‘impertinent and ridiculous note’, and sent him, tamed and humiliated, out of the fort to live on such fish as he could catch when food became scarce. ‘Military Gentlemen’, wrote Simpson, after about three months at his post, ‘from the few examples I have seen are very unfit subjects for this country, we do not want idlers, but men of good sound constitutions who can make up their minds to the drudgery of the service, the mode of living, want of comfort, and general privations and inconveniences which are incident to the country’. With Mr. Back, the midshipman whom Franklin sent up

from his expedition's post at Great Slave Lake to solicit supplies and clothes since 'the Officers (not to mention the men) . . . are destitute of the most common articles of Dress, such as Spirits etc', Simpson was equally firm. The Company's interests were not to be sacrificed to the expedition which, in any case, Simpson thought partisan towards the Northwesters, badly planned and poorly commanded by a man who could not walk more than eight miles a day, who needed his three meals a day, and for whom 'Tea is indispensable'.

With experience, self-confidence soon showed itself. The exact verbal arrangements which Simpson had made with Colvile before he left London are not known, and perhaps he had made none, though he told Oxley that 'the Committee of the Honble H.B. Coy. were not in the habit of doing business in such a loose and slovenly manner'. But he wrote and thought as though his position was assured and his status settled. His rising anger against John Clarke came to a head when he found that the man's vanity had led him to attract to Ile-à-la-Crosse the Indians from Lac la Loche and that, despite clear orders from Governor Williams, Clarke would not send on to Athabaska the pemmican and other goods which were necessary for settling New Caledonia and Mackenzie River. Of a hundred and eight bags of pemmican delivered to Ile-à-la-Crosse for the use of Athabaska, Clarke and his men had consumed seventy, 'which in all likelihood will be a death blow to our prospects in the North'. So, while he wrote temperately to Clarke, Simpson reported in his Journal the man's malice, pride, stupidity and corruption—'this Gentleman's conduct is so diametrically opposite to what it ought to be that the most exemplary punishment I trust awaits him; his folly, obstinacy, and self-importance has been more baneful to the Compys. interests in the North than all the opposition of the North West Coy.' Yet Simpson himself was quite capable of acting on his own responsibility, even to the extent of contravening direct orders.

It was, therefore, a very knowledgeable and dependable George Simpson who came out to Norway House on the heels of the melting ice in May and June, 1821. He had been through starvation and mutiny, had suffered the defects both of character and organisation in both companies, and had learned with a fascinating speed the details and the balance of the trade. He had seen his men eat up to ten pounds of meat a day and complain that they were half-starved, he had seen his Indians so drunk that they could not hunt; he had also seen his men go three days with no food and had himself travelled for eleven days on little or nothing, while he had not a drop of rum in the place to encourage the Indians to hunt for him. His

confidence had run from the flattering prospects with which he arrived at his post and generously remitted half the Indians' debts, to realisation that he had only six men on whom he could depend and the conclusion (reached in January) that he was hopelessly outnumbered, laboured under a thousand disadvantages, and could not hope for prosperity in Athabaska under such a régime. There were times when he thought the Northwesters held an overwhelming advantage, times when he planned to arrest the redoubtable Samuel Black himself, and times when he concluded that 'another such year as the last will prove fatal to the Compys. prospects' in Athabaska, and that, for himself, he would not on any consideration undergo a repetition of the vexations, misery and anxiety, which he had suffered.

This was trial by fire, and it stamped upon Simpson the mark of an accomplished and wise trader by the time he began his journey outwards. He bore the outward signs of his graduation too. He had his woman, a half-breed daughter of George Taylor, who commanded the schooner at York; her brother Tom Taylor was Simpson's personal servant and she bore him a daughter in the fall of the year. For his journey out he had his own light canoe made, he got some special berry pemmican sent down from Peace River (at least he ordered it) and he wrote knowingly of his 'favourite steersman'.

When Simpson had made his run of the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan, two miles in six minutes, 'the finest run in North America', he was met by a North West party with news that the two companies had reached a coalition. This he regarded as a possible hoax; but next day Governor Williams gave him the authentic news at Norway House. Pleased as he was when the news was confirmed, his first reaction was 'disappointment that instead of a junction our Opponents have not been beaten out of the Field, which with one or two years of good management I am certain might have been effected'. Simpson had been and seen, and his was a seeing eye. He knew the need of 'good management' and was capable of achieving it as no other servant of the Company had ever been. The coalition gave him his opportunity, and it is one of the great coincidences of this story that, as the Company at last achieved mastery, it found in George Simpson its master.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE COALITION OF THE COMPANIES

As Simpson had passed by Fort William, on his way inland, and had glimpsed the Northwesters reorganising their affairs, they were deeply divided, and the Hudson's Bay Committee knew of their divisions. But they were by no means despondent even if they were no longer confident of victory. In fact the hopes of both their parties, the Agents and the Winterers, were based upon a belief that a union of the two companies could be achieved, and much of this belief derived from the news that death had removed their most determined opponent (as they considered him), Selkirk. The consumption of the lungs which had brought him home from Canada had persisted although he had gone to live in the south of France. Rumours of the gravity of his illness had got through to Athabaska, and when he died at Pau on 8th April, 1820, and the news of his death was made known, the Northwesters, as they communicated the sad news to Robertson (who seems to have had a quite genuine attachment to the 'amiable nobleman'), rubbed in the point with a remark that 'all obstacles to a union were now at an end'.

His opposition to their proposals in 1815, and again in 1817, lent colour to the Northwesters' view that Selkirk was the intractable enemy whom they must overcome, and by the time he left Canada in November 1818 the travesty of the trials had left him desperately hostile to any kind of negotiation. But in London he found that the wholesale fur-dealers (wealthy men, as he said) were upset because the clashes of the two companies made prices unstable and unpredictable; they were ready to offer their intervention or, if that failed, to set on the City members to make a stir in Parliament. This was something of a pointer to remind the two companies that although the Colonial Office seemed reluctant to act, there was a possibility that political opinion could be mobilised, and Selkirk's return to England started a movement to secure Cabinet attention for the problem. It became clear that the Cabinet as a whole had not been consulted by Bathurst as he handled the fur companies, that they knew nothing of the violently discriminatory dispatch of 11th February, 1817, in which Selkirk was threatened with Parliamentary action. It became clear, too, that until a fairly late date even Bathurst had not been actively engaged but Goulburn had framed

and phrased the policy. Talk of a political attack on Bathurst was dropped, but Selkirk and the Company could be sure of a hearing when his powerful political friends had once learned his story. The story, too, had fresh weight in it, for Williams' action at the Grand Rapid had put in his hands the correspondence of the Northwesters and revealed such a chain of 'premeditated villainy' that Selkirk was sure it must bring the end of the 'gang of unprincipled Robbers' who opposed him.

The Committee found Governor Williams' revelations very much to the point and resolved to send a series of extracts to Lord Bathurst, together with copies of the correspondence from Maitland, Garden and Auldjo, their agents in Montreal. So in September 1819 Bathurst received a complete narrative of the Hudson's Bay Committee's version of the struggle, from the start of Robertson's Athabaska expedition in 1815 up to the first capture and imprisonment of Robertson in 1818. Later notes gave news of his escape from drowning at the Pin Portage, and gave accounts of the history and formation of the North West Company and of the Athabaska trade. Bathurst, who had ordered the compilation of the 1819 Blue Book of *Papers relating to the Red River Settlement. 1815-1819*, was (probably for the first time, for Selkirk doubted whether he had read the papers hitherto sent in) really well-informed on the whole issue.

The North West Company also submitted a statement of facts, to show that from the beginning of 1816 they had been constantly pressing for an investigation into their conduct. But by 1819 much of their earlier confidence was beginning to evaporate. 'Their concerns are distracted' wrote Governor Williams when he had perused their dispatches, 'and the cement of unanimity broken among themselves, which with the dissolution of Partnership ending next year, will I trust be a death blow'. From all sides came the same sort of rumours—that William McGillivray was about to retire in favour of Simon, and to devote himself to his legislative duties; and that this indicated the insolvency and approaching dissolution of the concern. Things had begun to come to a head at the meeting at Fort William in the summer of 1819, when William McGillivray failed in an attempt to get the wintering partners to renew their contracts for a further period. The question was then openly raised whether the winterers might not get the Hudson's Bay Company to act as their agent if they should fail to renew their engagement with McTavish, McGillivray and Company. It was probably John McLoughlin who made this proposal, for lawyer Gale (who sup-

ported the idea) described the proposer as a wintering partner who 'possesses influence to withdraw almost every useful member of the North-west association, who are dissatisfied and alarmed at being unable to get what is due to them from the Montreal houses'.

Any such move from the winterers was best countered by making them fear that in the end they would find the Hudson's Bay Committee dominated by the very Agents against whom they were in revolt, and in the late autumn of 1819 the Agents renewed their attempts. Edward Ellice approached Colvile; he pretended that he was acting independently of the North West Company, but this Selkirk thought 'all bunkum, and that he is merely their envoy, if otherwise is there not a serious question as to his solvency and responsibility for a transaction of such magnitude'. Sick unto death, Selkirk had good reason to wonder whether he had the resources to continue the struggle. To the Solicitor for Scotland, James Wedderburn, he wrote at this time that although he realised the desperate state of his finances and the need for a sinking fund, his honour was at stake in the contest with the North West Company and in the support of the settlement. Unless utterly forbidden by a decision of the Privy Council against his rights, Selkirk could not even contemplate abandoning the colony; he considered his character at stake, and he needed to prove that the colony was neither a wild and visionary scheme nor a sordid trick, by making the settlement triumph.

But although Selkirk was resolved that giving up the settlement, or selling it to the North West Company, was entirely out of the question, it did not follow that he might not sell his Hudson's Bay stock. True, he had always regarded the Hudson's Bay holding as 'a necessary guard for the settlement' since there were some clauses in the deed of feoffment which could be vexatious unless Selkirk and his friends had enough influence on the Committee to make sure they were interpreted in a friendly way. Yet his was the only block of stock which could give Ellice and his friends the sort of holding which they needed, the latest proposals had suggested a guarantee of Red River as against a guarantee of Athabaska, and Selkirk's finances were sorely straitened. So though he wrote of his repugnance to any transaction which would make him the means of putting power into the hands of 'a set of unprincipled miscreants' and emphasised that any such move would be disgraceful if it were done for pecuniary advantage, Selkirk was nevertheless undecided. On the one hand he knew that the Charter would be of great value if it could be exploited by a single company at minimum expense, and on the other he felt that the combination of the North West Company

and government might drive him to a deal. There was at the back of his mind a fear that a move might be impending in the House of Commons for the overthrow of the Charter, and that by selling his stock he might get Ellice to support the Charter, and so might get acceptance of his title to the land.

In this Selkirk, anxious above all things to secure the colony, was anticipating that government would look kindly on any move towards amalgamation and might be disposed to grant generous privileges to a united concern. 'The Colonial Office, finding themselves in a scrape, may not be unwilling to get out of it handsomely', he wrote; and Colville had in fact been told that Goulburn was urging the expediency of a compromise without the Privy Council making a final decision since such a decision might be unfavourable to both companies. Unofficial government statements were that government might confirm any arrangement which the two companies might make, and that the disputed right to the territory ought to be made a matter of compromise. So plain a hint could not be overlooked, and though Selkirk felt he would rather take his chance of whatever damages might be given against him after evidence had been heard in open court rather than acquiesce in any equality of 'faults on both sides', he left the decision to Colville and Halkett, to accept Ellice's offer if they thought it advantageous and not compromising to his character.

It was while negotiations were at this stage, on Christmas Eve, 1819, that Colville received a letter from Samuel Gale (addressed to Selkirk) which told of the tentative movement of the wintering partners to desert their Agents and to make an arrangement with the Hudson's Bay Company. The letter, not being addressed to himself, could not be put before the Committee, but Colville assured Gale that there could be no objection against the principles of the proposal, though there were some wintering partners whom the Hudson's Bay Committee would not wish to be included. He brought his fine business mind to focus on the possibilities involved, and immediately foreshadowed arrangements by which the management and the profits of the trade might be divided between the Committee, the 'managers resident in the Hudson's Bay or interior country', and the stock-holders. He saw that such a proposal could only end logically in an amalgamated concern and that the idea of the Hudson's Bay Committee simply acting as agents for the winterers would not work.

Perhaps by this time Colville knew enough of the history of the Company to have been impressed by the logic of the endless struggle

against private trade by servants. He certainly knew that George Wollaston's proposals, in the dark years of the war, to abdicate from active participation in the fur trade and to leave that trade to the factors had amounted, in effect, to such an arrangement as was now proposed. Wollaston's proposals had indeed been defeated, largely because Colville had himself brought a new and active spirit into the Company's management. But Robertson had been instructed to make arrangements for outfitting freemen and Iroquois hunters which were not different in principle from the North West practice, and as recently as 1818 the Committee had approved of the change in principle. This occasion rose from a proposal by James Bird that the Company should supply the American Dixon with goods for trade in the Sioux territories. The Committee approved; the goods were to be sold at ten per cent. above invoice prices and Dixon's furs were to be shipped to London and were there to be sold by the Company at a fee of twenty per cent. of the sale price (which would cover insurance and other liabilities). In fact, although the whole history of the Company had so far been based on rigid adherence to the principle and practice of Company-trade, there were many recent moves towards the opposite practice, of private trade for which the Company would merely be the agent for outfitting and for selling.

Such proposals, however, had all come to nothing, and at the end of 1819 Colville had behind him both his own convictions and the history of the Company when he told Gale that the Committee would certainly agree to any measures which would secure peace, and just and humane treatment for the Indians as well as for the servants employed in the trade. These things, however, could only be secured, and the Company could only accept responsibility in the face of government and public opinion, if the Governor and Committee retained control of the trade. So he suggested a unified and controlled trade, such as the Company had always practised, but in which two-thirds of the profits would be allotted to the 'parties who reside in the interior and personally conduct the trade' and one-third should be allotted to the stock-holders. The details could be arranged; they would have to include payment of interest on capital as a preliminary charge before profits were worked out, and they might include a half-share of profits for those who retired after long and loyal participation in the trade. But on such general principles Colville was eager to negotiate with the North West winterers and to end the struggle.

To Colville, acceptance of the *démarche* from Gale on behalf of the winterers meant that he could not continue negotiations with Ellice,

and he forthwith sent 'a decided negative' to the Agents' proposals. This was a decision which he and Halkett took even before they heard from Selkirk, and in so doing they were shrewd enough to realise that Ellice's proposals, as long as they remained on the table, must mean that the winterers were acting under the threat of finding themselves up against the Agents even at the end of the story, if the Agents bought out the Hudson's Bay Company. Selkirk, ill and ill-at-ease, could not think so clearly and so uncompromisingly. Excited by Gale's letter, which 'seemed to alter the whole face of affairs and drove all other matters out of my head', he yet felt reluctant to turn his back on Ellice. Though Lady Selkirk roundly urged that 'the choice between the adoption and rejection of Ellice's proposal, is merely a question between money and principle', Selkirk nevertheless felt that the negotiations should be continued so as to gain immediate peace for the settlers, rather than that the struggle should continue, with the Charter still in dispute and the settlers subject to 'all the mischief that Goulburn's malice and Bathurst's perversity can do', with the whole issue subject to 'the glorious uncertainty of the law'.

Colville had already acted, both with a reply to Gale and with a rebuff to Ellice, before this view of Selkirk's was known. But there followed a period of almost a year—the calendar year of 1820—during which Ellice and the Agents recovered much of their power of manoeuvre and at the end of which they emerged with almost all the power and prestige which they sought. This was the year during which Robertson came out from his successful winter in Athabaska and Peace River, and in which his capture at the Grand Rapid emphasised the rift between the winterers and the Agents. That act of violence, according to his captors, was designed to give the Agents a stronger position in the negotiations. It was, however, in more direct defiance of the Colonial Office than anything which the North-westerners had hitherto ventured. At the same time the *Blue Book*, the recriminations within the Cabinet which Selkirk had stirred up, and perhaps even the constant appeals of the Hudson's Bay Committee, had provoked Bathurst to intervention. In February 1820 he sent to both companies a stern note to say he was afraid that their servants might renew hostilities, especially in Athabaska, and formally requiring them to instruct their servants to obey the Prince Regent's Proclamation of May 1817 on pain of His Majesty's severest displeasure. This was the message that Simpson took up to Fort William.

To this warning the North West Company immediately replied with an assurance that no time would be lost in communicating His

Lordship's views to the servants of the Company. The Hudson's Bay Committee replied more at length, for they included a catalogue of the wrongs which they had suffered. The death of Selkirk in April must have affected the negotiations, though no detailed account of the moves can now be reconstructed. His affairs were found to be in the greatest disorder; his debts amounted to about £160,000, while his property in America was assumed to be unsaleable, and the value of his Hudson's Bay stock was doubtful. But the wintering partners were assured; as soon as the news reached Canada, that Selkirk's death would make no difference to the negotiations in process and the Agents found them still a truculent and 'strange sett' when they met at Fort William that summer and debated the death of Selkirk, the capture of Robertson, and the renewal of their agreement.

By that time the rift had become clear and Robertson's friend George Moffatt acted as intermediary so that Gale, and through him Colvile, knew as well as the Agents that the Northwesters were not likely to be unanimous when it came to renewing their agreement. The Agents, despite their forebodings, were in good heart; not only did they carry through the capture of Robertson but when Bathurst handed over the documents involved to the Council, and the Hudson's Bay Committee again reiterated their wrongs in a lengthy memorial, in May, the North West Agents then directly impugned the Charter, and the consequent grant of land to Selkirk, as monopolistic and *ultra vires*. In answer to the Northwesters' petition, which was referred to the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, the Hudson's Bay Company's solicitors advised them to enter a Caveat and to plead for a hearing. It seemed as though at last the legal validity of the Charter must come to the test.

But as the legal process began to gather momentum the scene shifted. The letter which Colvile had so promptly sent to Samuel Gale in the previous December was by him transmitted to Moffatt, and by him to John McLoughlin, the forceful leader of the winterers. So when Simon McGillivray tried to delude the winterers with tales of negotiations in which only a few details needed settlement before the Hudson's Bay Committee sold out, McLoughlin contradicted him and the Agents were forced to realise that only a few of the winterers were likely to renew their partnership. So far, indeed, did the split within the North West Company go that the winterers (or a substantial number of them) gave McLoughlin and Angus Bethune a letter of attorney empowering them to ask the Agents to make an arrangement with the Hudson's Bay Company on the basis of a territorial division. If this should fail, as such proposals had

constantly failed, the attornies of the winterers were then empowered to negotiate direct with the Hudson's Bay Committee.

Faced with such a challenge, the Agents proved adamant; a 'perfect breach' took place between them and the winterers, and McLoughlin and Bethune turned to Samuel Gale in October 1820 to ask him to negotiate for them a passage to England, so that they might deal direct with the Hudson's Bay Committee. They asked that their mission should be concealed from all officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, but they seem to have assumed that the North West Agents would probably know all about their journey and made no stipulation over secrecy to them. Gale arranged the passage, and the two winterers took ship to England on the packet *Albion* at the end of 1820. Aboard with them was Colin Robertson, enjoying to the full the chance (if chance it was, for Samuel Gale had a hand in it) which had made him ship-mates with two such mysterious characters.

Robertson should have been taken from Lac la Pluie down to Montreal, and while his capture was reported to London he should have undergone another trial, for the Northwesters had three warrants out against him. The delays and expenses of the former trials seemed about to be repeated; but circumstances had changed. Selkirk was dead; Gale regarded Robertson as the evil genius of the quarrel and he knew that Robertson was anxious to get to England for his own affairs and that negotiations in London and in Montreal were at a critical stage. Gale wanted Robertson out of the way, and Robertson was anxious to be gone. He was easily persuaded by Gale to slip over the frontier to the United States, and thence take ship for England. Throughout his career Robertson had marked out McLoughlin and Bethune as the two men who would one day lead a revolt of the winterers, and he well knew the crisis which his own arrest had provoked among his enemies. So though Gale had mistrusted his character 'for meekness, humility and discretion' and had not told him of the McLoughlin-Bethune mission to London, the secret was soon out and Robertson was able to 'play the old soldier' and enjoy himself vastly when he found that there was even a rumour that his own journey was designed to introduce the Northwesters to the Committee, and that his capture had been a last desperate attempt to prevent him from doing so.

With all his banter, Robertson was quite certain that William McGillivray knew of the winterers' mission and of its object. McLoughlin and Bethune had officially 'gone down' on the year's furlough to which they were entitled, but the Agents knew the turn

which events had taken, and at about this time (but by another ship) William and Simon McGillivray also took passage to London. So at the end of 1820 all forces were converging on London, where the Crown Lawyers had the Charter under discussion, where Colville and his friends were reviewing the Company's strength and weakness, and where Edward Ellice was pursuing a semi-independent role which has never been precisely analysed. He later stated that Bathurst had sent for him and had asked him to bring about a union between the two companies, and that he had embarked upon that very difficult negotiation. Certainly he was closely concerned with the negotiations, and he was among the very few men who combined some knowledge of the fur trade with some political influence in England.

Even at the time Robertson suspected that Ellice exaggerated his own importance and that of his friends, and thought everything hung on his nod. But the confident approach of Ellice and the McGillivrays was impressive and Robertson, as the land drew in sight, and still more on his arrival in London, began to fear that the Committee's habitual ingrained (and proper) habits of 'Counting-House conversation' might lead to a needless surrender. For Colville and his friends had been told that the Canadians had gone into Athabaska in force, with a host of men to set against the shortage of goods to which they had been reduced, and Colville seemed convinced that the North-westerners had resources to continue the contest. Ellice and Simon McGillivray, whatever their previous relations, had speedily come together when the McGillivrays had reached London, and were talking as though they had the Bank of England at their disposal, and Robertson found that his own views were suspect. He had been preceded by a letter from William Williams in which the Governor suggested that he had deliberately allowed himself to be captured so as to come out from inland and attend to his own affairs. Coldly received by the Committee, he felt the death of Selkirk keenly, and though his affidavit of North West actions was eagerly sought as testimony, he was soon aware that little attention was paid to his conviction that the Committee could negotiate from a position of strength since he had fully established the trade of Athabaska, the key to the whole problem.

Colville, in fact, was more civil and helpful to Robertson than any other member of the Committee. But he had good reason to doubt the wisdom of his ebullient subordinate, for not only had Governor Williams cast aspersions on his conduct, but Robertson's personal affairs were in such a turmoil as to throw doubt on his capacity for business.

Colville, too, was gravely perturbed about the state of the Company's affairs. The 'Counting-House conversation' to which his business habits drove him revealed that the Company's financial position had steadily deteriorated since the Athabaska campaign had started. The early successes of the 'Retrenching System' were soon outrun by the bills for wages and for goods exported, and the last occasion on which the fur-sales of the year had brought in more than had been spent on wages, debts due to servants, and goods exported, had been in 1813. The favourable balance even in that year was largely due to the fact that the *Prince of Wales* had failed to return home in 1812 and had brought the furs for two years to the sales of 1813. Since that year the striking of an accurate balance for the year's trade had again been made difficult by the failure of ships to return in 1816 and in 1817, and by the fact that at 30th September, when the financial year ended, many furs lay still awaiting sale in the following February and March. But one year carried into another, and Colville and his friends on the Committee knew their position well enough; they knew, for example, that despite sales which had risen to almost £95,000 in 1818, and which touched £86,000 in 1819 and £69,000 in 1820, their overdraft at the Bank of England was swollen from the low figure of £23,500 in 1814 to £75,000 in 1820, while outstanding and unpaid bills had risen in the same period from £4,734 to £30,502. This showed a trading loss of over £12,000 a year over a long period, and it says much for the reputation of the Company that it should have managed to continue unruffled in such conditions, especially since it was clear that it had no government support behind it, and since it did not even manage the preponderant proportion of the fur trade during these years.

The outstanding factor in this situation was, of course, the confidence of the Directors of the Bank of England, with whom the Company had many close ties. Ability to overdraw without question up to the sum of £75,000 was the essential condition of the trade. But even this great asset would have been valueless if the Committee had lacked the courage to use it; and here a simple change in book-keeping practice probably explains many decisions. Colville had in 1811 set up a 'Reserved Fund' and had rapidly built it up to over £50,000. Such a reserve must have given a feeling of confidence in facing the expenses and overdrafts of this difficult period—to some extent with justification. But to some extent the Reserved Fund was a fiction, for it represented only a change in accountancy. Up to 1810 the Company's *Charges* account had merely performed the function which that account had fulfilled from the early days; it had

been credited with transfers from the *Profit* and *Loss* account and had paid the bills for customs dues, interest on loans, and 'sundry accounts' of a like nature, including such 'Charges extraordinary' as 'Secret Service Money'. It normally ran at an expenditure of between £4,000 and £6,000 a year. Then, in 1810, it suddenly showed an item of £22,745 credited from 'Sundry accounts', and thence annually received a comparable sum. These credits were a book-keeping innovation but yet they represented real assets, hitherto lost sight of. These were the remains of goods kept at the posts, of which 75% of the estimated value in 1811 was credited to 'charges', and thenceforward a similar 75% of the annual value of goods exported was credited to 'charges'. The 75% of goods remaining in 1811, and of those subsequently exported, was the 'Advance' in price at which they would be sold. It was the difference between prices in Canada and prices in England and represented both the Company's practice in trading and a conservative estimate of the inevitable profit once the goods had been shipped. The Reserved Fund was later dispersed to a 'Percentages Account', which was merely a change in name. Once the account had been established the Committee knew that they had this future profit on which to reckon, so that although the Reserved Fund did not represent actual profits which had been put aside for contingencies (as one would normally expect) yet it gave both the Committee and their creditors a confidence which might otherwise have faltered during these years of struggle.

But even the Reserved Fund or the Percentages Account, in the background, was little comfort to the Committee as the negotiations of 1820 came to a head. The bank overdraft stood as high as it would go. Halkett was afraid that the Company was in desperate straits for money and Colvile even wondered whether they could carry on for the two years which must in any case elapse before the North West partnership expired, and began to 'doubt the scoundrels are too strong and rich for us, in spite of all Halkett's imaginations of their ruin'.

Despite all these difficulties, the Hudson's Bay Committee must have glimpsed the end of the struggle as the winterers' representatives made it clear in London that the Agents could no longer claim their loyalty; and Robertson assured them that McLoughlin at least was a stout fellow, though he mistrusted some of his supporters. He made it clear, too, that for all their high talk and air of moneyed support, the North West Agents could now only hope for an 'arrangement' since Athabaska was lost to them. Here the Committee were

at once better and worse qualified than Robertson to form an opinion—worse because they had only William Williams' slightly jaundiced despatch to set against Robertson's enthusiasm and knowledge; and better because they knew the character and capacity of George Simpson and had reason to believe that any advantage which Robertson might have won in Athabaska would now be fully exploited.

Even so, there seemed little chance of a completely satisfactory solution. At best, when Colville and the Committee knew that they had both the Agents and the wintering partners alike seeking an arrangement, in 1820, it seemed that the choice lay between an alliance with one or the other element of the North West Company, and that there was little chance of absorbing both. On the whole, with the heritage of Selkirk's bitter animosity against the Agents, it had seemed most likely that the winterers would find favour—always with the proviso which Colville had made when first approached, that some of the most notoriously violent among them would have to be excluded from any arrangement.

But it was almost certain that the Agents would prove more adept negotiators than the somewhat shame-faced winterers, McLoughlin and Bethune, and so in fact it proved. While the very presence of the winterers in London virtually gave the whip-hand to Colville, the Agents got additional strength (which they badly needed) from the government's desire to see a compromise solution. But Ellice, with his air of government support, was constrained to approach Colville through Robertson; and Robertson knew the actual situation too well to be taken in by Ellice's big talk and by his severe remarks on McLoughlin and Bethune and their powers of attorney from the wintering partners. Still, the impression that 'the Bank of England was at their disposal', and that they had plenty of funds to renew the contest, was bound to tell with Colville, and Robertson was right in his expectation that the Agents would make a better bargain than they had a right to expect. Colville, too, was clearly affected by the dispatches from William Williams, which were far less sanguine than were Robertson's glowing accounts. Simon McGillivray, too, astute and direct, and full of knowledge of the actualities of the fur trade, was at least as persistent in his pressure for a 'union' as was Edward Ellice; and his frank approach made him, at least to some, a more acceptable negotiator than his friend, the Member of Parliament.

The final negotiations, in fact, were obviously conducted with considerable bluff, and on the whole the North West Agents were

the better bluffers. For whereas the revolt of the winterers and the nemesis of 'the capturing system' had made it almost certain that, finance apart, they would not be able to carry on the contest when their existing agreement expired in 1822, the Agents secured such terms that they were able to maintain that in the outcome it was they who had taken over the Hudson's Bay Company! 'From the union', said Ellice, 'sprang the present Hudson's Bay Company which is more in fact a Canadian company than an English company in its origin'. The outcome was, indeed, not easily and directly secured; as late in the negotiations as January 1821 discussions were broken off, and the climax brought the Hudson's Bay Committee to a yielding mood. Halkett and Colvile were both uneasy and could see no way to continue the opposition until the North West agreement ran out. So William McGillivray was able to explain that though 'it would have been worse than folly to have continued the contest further, We have made no submission—we met and negotiated on equal terms—and rating the N W Co. collectively—they now hold 55 out of 100 shares'.

Once negotiations were resumed, agreement came rapidly. The draft was agreed and outlines of the proposals were sent out to Governor William Williams on 26th February, even before the formal draft was put before a General Court of the Hudson's Bay Company on 26th March, 1821. The whole trade was to be carried on as one concern, as from the 1st June, 1821, in the name of the Hudson's Bay Company, and this agreement was to run for twenty-one years. Each company was to find an equal share of the capital needed for the trade, and they were to divide the annual profits into a hundred shares, of which twenty were to go to the Hudson's Bay Company's proprietors and twenty to the North West Company's proprietors. Forty shares of the profit were to go to 'the persons actually employed in conducting the Trade in North America', ten were to be kept in reserve, and the remainder were to be split, five to Lord Selkirk's heirs, and five to Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice as compensation for loss of their London Agency.

So McGillivray's calculation that the Northwesters held fifty-five out of the hundred shares in the new joint concern was a specious piece of face-saving; it could only refer to the shares of profits, not to shares in control, and it was arrived at by adding together the twenty shares reserved to the Agents, the five shares due to McGillivray and Ellice in compensation for the lost agency, five of the ten shares which were to be held in reserve, and twenty-five of the forty shares of profits which were allotted to the 'wintering people'. Of the

latter, thirty-two of the fifty-three commissioned officers among whom the forty shares were to be divided were former Northwesters—fifteen of the twenty-five Chief Factors and seventeen of the twenty-eight Chief Traders. On a close calculation this might indeed give McGillivray something like the figure which he quoted, but it would have no bearing upon control of the trade, only upon distribution of the profits. Even then the argument would only have substance on the assumption that the Agents and all of the former winterers could be counted as one unified concern; and that was manifestly not so, for McLoughlin and Bethune had been given powers of attorney by eighteen of the winterers.

The North West Company as a combination of Agents and winterers had split and was at an end. There was no reality in the assumption that their shares of profits ascribed to those two components could be treated as a single interest, for the outstanding fact was that the Agents could no longer count upon the winterers. 'What a dreadful blow this must be to the Montreal agents' wrote Robertson. But the Agents had played their cards well, and they achieved almost equality in the management of the joint concern. This was something of a personal triumph, for the joint trade was to be conducted by a committee of which the chairman was to be the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and of which the four members were to be derived equally from the North West Company (Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice) and from the Hudson's Bay Committee (Colville and Nicholas Garry).

This did not amount to the creation of a new company in which Northwesters swamped the Hudson's Bay men. Indeed, the 'Agreement' specified no more than a working arrangement for the next twenty-one years. Within the framework of the agreement the Hudson's Bay Company as such, with its Charter, its Governor and its Committee, remained intact and would re-emerge at the end of the specified period. In the interim they were to nominate their Governor and two members to the joint committee or 'Board', and were to allow that joint committee to trade under the Charter and under the name of the Governor and Company, both within the chartered territories and elsewhere in North America.

The 'Board' thus set up was therefore distinct from the Hudson's Bay Company as such; and the position of the chartered company was safeguarded in many of the terms of the agreement. The capital stock which each company was to put at the disposal of the 'Board' was to be assessed at fair trade valuations, and was to include debts due by Indians and by traders, posts and ships; and Hudson's Bay

House in London. The two contributions were to be made equal by payment into the joint concern of a balancing contribution in 1822. But although the Northwesters were to put the King's Posts in Lower Canada, and all their other posts, into the joint concern, the posts were given no capital value, to be counted in favour of the Northwesters. The Hudson's Bay Company's posts were not mentioned in the *Agreement*, though the shops, the house in London, and trade-goods and debts, were; but the Company's right to pursue settlement and colonisation was preserved as a separate activity in which the Northwesters would not be concerned. In all of these ways the separate core of the Hudson's Bay Company was preserved; and although the Northwesters maintained that in accepting and perpetuating the Charter (which they had strongly challenged as recently as May 1820), they were so doing because its privileges fell into their own hands, there was more to it than so simple a take-over, for they agreed to pay £5,000 to the Hudson's Bay Company 'by way of compromise' and 'in satisfaction of all claims and demands'. This, in effect, acknowledged the validity of the Charter as the property of one of the two parties to the agreement, the Hudson's Bay Company, and secured from the other party a payment on that account.

But despite the clear evidence that the Hudson's Bay Company remained intact, and that the Northwesters cannot be held to have taken over either the Company or its Charter, they had made very good terms which enabled them, according to their individual capacities, to share in the trade of the united companies both in their profits and in their management. These were better terms than Colvile might have screwed out of them once the defection of the winterers had given him control of the situation, and it might be held that in giving such power to the Agents he was playing the winterers false. But Colvile was taking long views; he resisted attempts by the Agents to victimise some of the Hudson's Bay men who had shown most spirit during the struggle, he achieved the initial exclusion of the more unprincipled Northwesters (Alexander Macdonell, Peter Skene Ogden and Samuel Black), and the winterers who had rebelled against the Agents were fully acknowledged in the new concern. In according his terms to both the Agents and to the winterers Colvile was, in fact, showing a prescience and a breadth of vision which were the foundations of the Company's greatness in the next half-century, for thereby he precluded all effective opposition and gave to the new 'Board' not only the great Charter with its claims to land and privilege but also a virtual monopoly of the fur trade of British North America.

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
K.G., O.M., C.H., F.R.S., M.P.

*Grand Seigneur of the Company of Adventurers of England
trading into Hudson's Bay*

BOOK FIVE

Company Rule, 1821-1870

CHAPTER XVII

REORGANISATION UNDER THE DEED POLL AND THE LICENCE FOR EXCLUSIVE TRADE

The trading monopoly which had been secured by the coalition of the two companies was immediately strengthened and confirmed by statute. Edward Ellice later maintained that he had been instrumental in manoeuvring this confirmation through Parliament; it may well have been so, for he was himself a member, and he was influential and well-connected. Parliament, in fact, had heard almost too much of the troubles of Red River and of the two companies, and members had before them other, more immediate and important, problems—the problem of ‘The Queen’s Affair’ (the royal divorce), the disenfranchisement of the borough of Gram-pound, the slave trade, the disabilities of Roman Catholics, the monopoly of the East India Company, the stability of the Bank of England (the only subject on which Ellice spoke) and the legislation which the advent of steam engines would make necessary. The recent disputes had left a feeling that accounts from Canada must have been grossly exaggerated, so much so that when Governor Berens iterated and reiterated his ‘undeniable proofs of the most unlawful outrages’ he was told that ‘it appears that you have allowed yourself to be much misled’. In so far as it was accepted that reputable merchants could possibly be guilty of such conduct as was alleged, two conclusions seemed to emerge—the judicial system must be revised so that crimes in the upper country could be punished effectively in the courts of Canada; and competition in the fur trade must be prevented.

With very little difficulty, therefore, in July 1821 the government put through the ‘Act for regulating the Fur Trade and establishing a Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction within certain parts of North America’. The question whether the Act established the right of the courts of Canada to extend their jurisdiction over Rupert’s Land proved thorny, but in the preamble it was stated that the

express purpose in view was to remove doubts as to the powers which existed under the Canada Jurisdiction Act of 1803. That act had placed offences in the Indian territories on a par with offences committed in Lower or Upper Canada, it had empowered the Governor or Lieutenant-governor to appoint Justices of the Peace for the Indian territories, and it had empowered such Justices of the Peace or 'any person or persons whatever' to arrest malefactors and to send them down to Lower Canada for trial. These powers merely introduced further bitterness into the rivalry of the North West and the Hudson's Bay Companies and did nothing to stop outrages; and Selkirk had obtained a legal opinion that the term 'Indian territories' could not include the chartered territories of Rupert's Land, or of his colony at Red River which derived from the same title. The validity of this opinion was doubtful, but the Canada Jurisdiction Act had certainly left it open for the 1821 Act to begin by a declaration that there were doubts 'and it is expedient that such doubts should be removed'. Ellice, however, declared that he had himself inserted the clauses relating to jurisdiction, that he had specifically exempted Rupert's Land from the Act of 1821, and that the utmost which could be claimed was that the Canadian authorities were empowered to appoint magistrates for Rupert's Land. This last admission was forced from him by a quotation from the new statute which explicitly declared that it was an act for extending the jurisdiction of the courts of Lower and Upper Canada to the territories heretofore granted to the Company. Even then Ellice maintained that the right of jurisdiction was tied to the appointment of magistrates, and that it did not in fact pass to Canada since no steps were taken to exercise the powers conferred.

The jurisdictional clauses of the Act of 1821 were to cause considerable discussion later in the century. At the time of their passing they were apparently clear in their meaning and intention, and they left the politicians hopeful that law and order could be brought to the fur trade by a means which would not entail great expenditure unless it was actually required. More to the point, even in this respect, was the hope of preventing the occurrence of crime by the elimination of competition in the fur trade. It was evident that the bulk of offences which would come under this act would, to judge from recent experience, arise from disputes between rival fur-traders; and there was a very strong body of opinion, even among the critics of the Company, which held that a competitive fur trade must inevitably debase and abuse the Indians and supply them with alcohol in large quantities, and that it would soon exhaust the fur-

bearing animals also. The 1821 Act therefore gave to the King power to grant an exclusive right to the Indian trade in any part of British North America except the two provinces of Canada or the territory of Rupert's Land.

Here again Ellice's evidence at a much later date offers an explanation for what happened in 1821, for in 1857 he told the Committee of the House of Commons, which was then enquiring into the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company, that in 1821 he had been particular to exclude Rupert's Land from the territories in which a grant of exclusive trade might be made, so as to preserve the chartered rights of the Company. The Crown got no right to override the chartered rights of the Company within its own territories. But the Crown did get a clear statutory right to grant an exclusive trade in the parts of British North America which were not excepted, and these parts included what were to be known as the Northwest Territories. They included Athabaska, Peace River, the Rockies and New Caledonia, Mackenzie River and the Pacific coast, the most remunerative and promising area for the fur trade. An exclusive grant for this wide area was, and was to prove, at least as valuable as the Company's original chartered rights.

The grant did not go through without some measure of pressure, and there came a time, in late August 1821, when Ellice began to fear that the slow methods of business which accompanied the new joint administration in its early development might prejudice the whole thing. When the two companies had agreed on coalition there were other rivals left in the field, and there was always a possibility that some of the disgruntled winterers might set themselves up independently. It had apparently been perfectly understood that when the new statute contemplated a grant of exclusive trade the grant should be made to the joint concern. But no individual or company had been mentioned in the terms, and Ellice was afraid that unless a grant could be pushed through, and a ready answer could be available that the grant had already been implemented, the independent Canadians might secure a recommendation from the Governor to Lord Bathurst. This would cause discussion and would embarrass the government, so Ellice pressed for immediate acceptance of the draft which had been sent from the Colonial Office for the Company's perusal, so as to get the whole thing cut and dried before the 'other side' began to raise the issue at all.

There was, in fact, the almost inevitable air of lobbying which would accompany the grant of a lucrative monopoly. But if the British Parliament had decided, as it had done, that 'competition in

the said trade had been found, for some years then past, to be productive of great inconvenience and loss, not only to the said Company and Association, but to the said trade in general, and also of great injury to the native Indians and other persons', then there was no other body to whom a grant of exclusive trade could reasonably have been given except the newly united companies. There could be no possible doubt that the Crown was acting within the terms of the statute of 1821 in making such a grant, and on 5th December, 1821, by Royal Proclamation the grant was made to the Governor and Company and to William McGillivray, Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice. The agreement between the two companies had been made for a period of twenty-one years, to begin with the outfit of 1821, and the Licence for Exclusive Trade was to run for the same period. The twenty-one years' period had been specified in the statute under which the proclamation was uttered, and there can be little doubt that the framers of the statute had envisaged a grant which would fit in with the new organisation of the united companies. That, at any rate, was the outcome, and it provoked little or no comment when the King granted rent-free for twenty-one years the exclusive right to the fur trade of British North America (with the specified exceptions of Rupert's Land and the provinces of Canada) to the joint concern of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West agents. They were to keep, and were to report to the Secretary of State, registers of their employees; they were not to trade in the territory of the United States, and their grant was not to exclude American citizens from the trade on the north-west coast westwards of the Rockies since the two countries had agreed on joint access to that area for a period of ten years from 1818.

They were to obey any regulations designed to improve the conditions of the Indians and were to prevent the trade in spirits, were to bring to justice any employee charged with a criminal offence, and were to enter into securities for the due execution of all criminal processes and of all civil suits in which more than £200 was involved. In this matter of the responsibility for justice the chartered territory of Rupert's Land was included, so that, whatever might be the ambiguities of the Canada Jurisdiction Act or of the Act of 1821, it was now made quite clear that the joint companies were responsible for the administration of justice throughout their trading domain.

The rest of the grant applied only to lands outside those included in the chartered grant. It therefore became difficult to assess the precise significance of this grant of 5th December, 1821, in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company as such. On the one hand the

grant implicitly accepted the Charter by excluding Rupert's Land from the trade clauses and it undoubtedly granted exclusive trade over the North-west territories, and exclusive enjoyment of the English portion of the trade of the Pacific slope, to the joint concern; but in the grant the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West agents were carefully particularised as two separate bodies.¹ On the other hand the grant clearly impinged upon the early Charter in that it extended the right of Crown and Canadian jurisdiction over Rupert's Land; but it assumed the validity of the Charter, and even in extending Crown jurisdiction it did so through the machinery of the Company.

In effect, therefore, the Act of July 1821 and the consequent grant of December confirmed to the joint concern the chartered right of exclusive trade and extended it to cover the rest of the Northwest territories in return for the assumption of responsibility for law and order and for the acceptance of duties towards the Indians. That was a balance of rights and duties which seemed acceptable, especially since (as the grant said) competition had been found to be 'of great injury to the native Indians, and of other persons our subjects'.

Though the separate existences of the Hudson's Bay Company and of the Agents were embodied in the act and in the grant, with the chartered trade and territory reserved to the Company, there never was any doubt that the Company would contribute these rights and possessions to the joint concern. Indeed, it had already contracted to do so, by the Agreement of 26th March, and on the same day as the Royal Grant was sealed the Company and the former North West agents entered into a Deed of Covenant in which they agreed to keep the terms of the grant, though only the government was to have the right to challenge their fulfilment of the terms.

It was to be some years before the 'coalition' of the two still distinct bodies merged into a 'union'. The 'union' then supervened largely because of the unity which had developed. But in the meantime the two concerns in coalition had agreed to share the trade as from the outfit of 1821, and had been granted the exclusive trade of the territories not already covered by the Company's Charter. Legal distinctions could wait; the first task was to re-organise the trade and its personnel so as to take advantage of the chance which monopoly had at last brought. With 'no other wish than to turn our advantages to the best account—but always consistent with justice', the Board for the management of the trade was in constant sessions during the winter, and by the time the Instructions were sent out in March 1822 they had evolved the groundwork of a plan.

Here the committee-work fell on the shoulders of the two Hudson's Bay men, Colvile and Garry and, since Ellice excused himself, on the brothers William and Simon McGillivray. The Northwesters found their suggestions received in the best possible manner by their Hudson's Bay colleagues, but any instructions formulated (as they well knew, with their own recent experience of the defection of 'The late Wintering Partners') would depend for their efficacy upon the co-operation of the men in the outposts. For the Agreement had made sound provision in setting aside forty shares of the profit for 'the persons actually employed in conducting the trade', and had followed this up by creating Councils for carrying out all by-laws and to arrange 'the necessary Out-fits and arrangements of the Season'. Two Governors were to be appointed to preside at the Councils of the Northern and Southern Factories respectively, and each 'district or department' would hold its own Council, that of the 'North District' to consist of a Governor and seven or more Chief Factors and that of the 'South District' to consist of a Governor and at least three Chief Factors. If stress of weather or other difficulties should make it impossible for the Chief Factors to attend the meetings, then the necessary business would be carried out by a temporary council to which Chief Traders were to be called, and at all such councils or temporary councils the business was to be carried by a bare majority of votes as long as the Governor concurred; but if the Governor dissented then a two-thirds majority was needed to over-ride him.

The organisation of the North West wintering partners had anticipated this active participation of the traders in the formulation of trade policy, and the Hudson's Bay Company also had tried to create councils of its traders and had shown an increasing deference to their views in the last years of the struggle. But the development of the Council system under the coalition in the years after 1821 was something more purposeful and more formal than had hitherto been seen. The new coalition introduced system and certainty in place of experiment and expectation. The Agreement for coalition between the two managements was followed—or rather accompanied, for it was issued on the same day, 26th March, 1821—by a document called 'The Deed Poll'.

By the Deed Poll the forty shares of profit which were allotted to the traders were split into eighty-five sub-shares, of which each Chief Factor was entitled to two sub-shares and each Chief Trader to one. Since twenty-five Chief Factors and twenty-eight Chief Traders were named in the Deed Poll, this accounted for seventy-

eight of the eighty-five sub-shares. These officers would hold their shares only so long as they remained active participants in the trade, and of the remaining seven sub-shares four were allotted to retired servants of the Hudson's Bay Company and three to retired servants of the North West Company, to cover the redundancy to be expected during the first seven years of the coalition, after which these seven sub-shares were to be amalgamated with the ten major shares already allotted, under the main Agreement, to retired personnel. The Chief Factors and Chief Traders were bound by the Deed Poll to devote themselves exclusively to the Company's trade and, when assembled in their Councils under their Governors, were given the duty and the right to make all arrangements for posts and outfits, and to inspect the accounts for the previous year at each post.

With this carefully organised incentive in the Shares of Trade—for losses incurred in any one year were to be set against future profits until they had been absorbed—the Company gave the Governors, Factors and Traders, a very full measure of control. They were to make rules and regulations, were to enquire into the conduct of all employees and, by a majority vote, were to have power to expel any Chief Factor or Chief Trader, but with suitable safeguards to prevent victimisation in the provisos that at least twelve Chief Factors must be present and two-thirds of them must assent, and that the Governor and Committee in London must concur in such a dismissal unless it was for habitual intoxication or fraudulent or wilful misapplication of property.

The Deed Poll was a carefully drafted and highly formal document. It dealt with supplies and stores, accounts, furlough in rotation, retirement, death, pensions and appointments, and the rights of retired servants and of the dependants of former servants to inspect accounts and to participate in the profits. The document ran to thirty-six clauses, and it must have puzzled some of the winterers sorely. But they had plenty of time to get to understand it, for the main clauses were made permanent, not to be varied without consent of the Governors and Councils. The object was clear, to attach the traders to the concern by every tie of interest and responsibility which could be devised, even at the cost of some of the authority which the Hudson's Bay Committee had formerly exercised.

This, however, had to be combined with a pruning of the extra servants who had been employed by both companies during the period of competition. Many of them, especially the Canadian half-breeds recruited in Montreal under Robertson's influence, by

Maitland, Garden and Auldjo as agents, were 'thoughtless, dissipated, and depraved in every sense of the word, secretly attached to their former employers the N.W. Coy. and in whom the smallest confidence cannot be placed'. Simpson had meant, in any case 'to purge the Country of a few of them', and he wanted young Scots with a reasonable education as junior officers, Orkney fishermen for the posts where fish was the mainstay of the provisions, and a carefully selected brand of renegade servants from the North West Company. Such Canadians Simpson thought 'altogether a superior class of Men'. Beating them was no use, for they might return the compliment, and Simpson proclaimed his faith in heavy fines and in recruiting so many that it would be clear that the most troublesome could be sacked. The coalition, of course, meant that the sheer manpower in terms of numbers which Simpson had envisaged was not necessary. But it gave the more weight to his strictures on the quality of the men, and it gave a great opportunity to secure the desired selection.

In this, as in much else that Simpson wrote both during his early days and during his maturity, there was nothing original or particularly penetrating; he was penning an effective and logical summary of current opinion, and it was an opinion which the Northwesters shared. When the two McGillivrays had sat with their colleagues to draw up the Instructions for Trade for 1822 they had spent much of their time on classing the clerks, of whom they reckoned that there were more than twice as many as the trade required. They meant to be generous—'without screwing up either Servants or natives'—but they came to the conclusion that as many as could be got rid of were to leave 'the Country' (the interior) as soon as possible. It was shrewdly realised that it would pay better to allow a man to retire on half-pay for one or two years, or even on full wages, than to keep him in the country when his services were not required.

Already the way had been prepared for such action, and the Deed Poll itself had contained clauses which encouraged immediate retirement. If they decided to retire before the end of June 1822, the newly appointed Chief Factors were to be entitled to one eighty-fifth sub-share of the profits of trade for seven years. Any vacancies created by retirements among the fifteen Northwester Chief Factors were to be filled from among the nine senior Northwester Chief Traders and any vacancies created by retirements among the ten Hudson's Bay Chief Factors were to be filled from among the Hudson's Bay Chief Traders; and any Chief Trader who failed to

get such promotion was offered an equal chance of immediate retirement with retention of a 'retired share' for seven years. Even the most senior and important officers, such as John George McTavish, John McLoughlin and Angus Bethune among the Northwesters and Thomas Vincent, James Bird and Colin Robertson among the Hudson's Bay men, were included in this offer. The only restriction was that only nine Northwesters and three Hudson's Bay men were to be given the option.

Not only were the servants to be settled; Councils had to be set going, trade-goods, debts and other assets of the two companies had to be assessed and carried into the joint account, and inevitable jealousies and petty personal problems involved in such arrangements had to be smoothed over and brought into a working system. Among other matters the relative seniority of the Northern and of the Southern Department had to be settled, and the positions of the two Governors had also to be arranged. Here, there can be no doubt of the position won by the Hudson's Bay men, for the two Governors named were both of them novices in the fur trade but had formerly been in the Company's service. William Williams, despite the warrants with which he was threatened, was named as the senior Governor on 28th March, 1821; and George Simpson, with only one year in the fur trade behind him, was named as the junior Governor on the following day. It was expected that for the first year both Governors would be kept busy at the Northern Factory, so Thomas Vincent (another Hudson's Bay man) was given a temporary authority to preside over the Council to be held at Moose, while two members of the Board themselves went out to settle the ultimate spheres of the two Governors and all the detailed arrangements which could only be settled on the spot.

For the Northwesters this was no novelty. At least one of the agents had always gone up from Montreal to meet the winterers at Michilimackinac or, later, at Fort William; and Simon McGillivray readily undertook this task. He arrived in New York from Greenland on 19th May, 1821, and was accompanied to Fort William by his brother William. Many matters required explanation and settlement between the Agents and the 'late Wintering partners', and indeed the settlement of their debts and balances took some years. For the moment, in 1821, the pressing problems were to get the new concern working rather than to wind up the old concerns. For this purpose the brothers McGillivray were accompanied from Montreal to Fort William by the Hudson's Bay Company's director Nicholas Garry. As the only bachelor on the Board, Garry had been

designated at an early stage as the obvious man to go to Rupert's Land. In 1821 he was about forty years old, and though he had only held shares in the Hudson's Bay Company for four years he appears (from the internal evidence of a diary which he kept) to have travelled in Russia, and he certainly had the accomplishment, not common in those days, of a knowledge of the German language. Though full of forebodings, Garry showed a firm broad purpose, and he brought to the task of settling invidious details a conviction that 'the straightforward manly way without Twists and Turns is the best'. This was a great asset when he, almost inevitably, became involved in disputes with Simon McGillivray; for the Northwester was intent to distribute appointments in such a way as to penalise those who had worked actively against the Agents in the recent struggle, whether they were Northwesters or Hudson's Bay men.

Garry, however, though he obviously knew far less about the fur trade than Simon McGillivray, was designated as the senior of the two emissaries, and was named as President of Council. He left London two days after the Deed of Agreement had been signed, on 28th March, 1821, and travelled to Liverpool in company with Angus Bethune, there to be joined on board the packet by John McLoughlin. So Garry travelled to New York in company with the representatives of the rebellious wintering partners, in the greatest good humour, and joined Simon McGillivray in New York. From there Garry travelled by boat and horse to Montreal, where he met most of the outstanding personalities of the fur trade—and many of their wives—and then set forth by canoe from Lachine in company with both William and Simon McGillivray, to arrive at Fort William on 1st July, after travelling about a hundred miles on the previous day and ninety on the day before.

Garry's Diary is rather a conventional travelogue than a commentary on the fur trade as he found it, and his narrative of events at Fort William is taken up with ceremonies and Indian dances rather than with the struggle for precedence. But Garry was not unprepared for the 'Discussion without end' in which the three weeks which he spent at Fort William were spent; and when he left in a small 'North canoe' for Assiniboia and Rupert's Land he tersely noted on 21st July, 'Left Fort William and never in my Life have I left a Place with less Regret'. He later wrote that 'My own Party turned as it were against me and I had nobody to confide in. Thus I arrived at Fort William. . . . Here I was almost alone; the only Person I could confide in (and who certainly was of the greatest Use to me) was a Man little acquainted with the World and so

prejudiced that in the Advice and Opinions he was always influenced by his own confined Opinion and Feelings of Dislike to the Heads of the Country'.

This description aptly fits Colin Robertson; and Robertson had signed the Agreement, received a commission as Chief Factor in London, and made his way back to Montreal under something of a cloud since his own partnership at Liverpool had gone bankrupt and Colville had been forced to arrange the business. He found the old Northwesters bitter against him, and even Nicholas Garry cold; in his own account of affairs he stood aloof, and his comments are a valuable supplement to Garry, especially in his verdict that 'Simon McGillivray has carried everything without even the semblance of opposition'.

Since Fort William lay outside Rupert's Land, no Council could be held there and even Garry's commission as President of Council was of no effect there. These were points which Simon McGillivray brought to the Director's notice, and Garry was forced to accept them and, indeed, to accept most of Simon's dispositions for the trade. For though Garry wrote that the Chief Factors, deprived of their formal rights in Council, had left with him the allocation of posts and that he had expressed his wishes and 'thus they were appointed and every Difficulty here thus removed', yet Robertson felt that Garry had been too complacent. Simon carried his point by insisting that since the 'Meeting' at which the appointments were to be made was not, and could not be, a proper Council, the Chief Traders should be allowed to attend as well as the Chief Factors. With this counterpoise to the former wintering partners, who had become Chief Factors, in the 'whirlpool of sorrows, vexations and disappointments' thus created, he demonstrated his power.

Considering the height of his ambition it is probable that Robertson could never have been adequately rewarded, in his own eyes—but he had already been paid a thousand pounds to straighten his affairs and he was now given his Chief Factor's post and command of the depot at Norway House. The strong feeling left behind by the former conduct of Ogden, Black and Alexander Macdonell had led to the Hudson's Bay Committee excluding these three from the Deed Poll, and Simon McGillivray tried to retaliate by excluding Governor Williams, Robertson and Clarke. Garry strongly denied that any such arrangement was contemplated, and his conduct and his Diary justify his denial. But though deprived of this triumph, Simon secured most of the appointments which he sought; Robertson's Norway House District seemed to the recipient merely a new

district beaten 'out of an old grog shop belonging to the Canadian expedition' (yet he stuck to it); McLoughlin was given no appointment, he being ill and absent from Fort William; and Angus Bethune 'insulted by one party and neglected by the other' was appointed to Moose. The attractive posts all went to supporters of the Agents, and, as Robertson wrote on the spot 'it would appear from the general features of the transactions at that place, the N.W.Co. had gained a complete victory and were dictating to us the terms of capitulation'.

Yet the decision was taken to abandon Fort William as a depot. The large stocks on hand were to be used to supply Athabaska, the Saskatchewan and Red River, and York Fort was then to be the great magazine. There John George McTavish, the experienced North West partner who had been responsible for the arrest of Colin Robertson at the Grand Rapids, was made superintendent of the all-important factory. But Colin Robertson himself thought it a reasonable appointment and so it proved.

While McGillivray enjoyed a tactical triumph in the allocation of posts, the strategic triumph of the Bay system of trade was complete. 'Thus the fur trade is forever lost to Canada', wrote William McGillivray, 'the treaty of Ghent destroyed the Southern trade—still the Capital and exertions of a few individuals supported the Northern trade, under many disadvantages, against a Chartered Company who brought their goods to the Indian Country at less than one half the Expense that ours cost us'. The decision to abandon Fort William as a depot made it clear to all that in the old clash of transport routes the approach through Hudson Bay had triumphed over that through Montreal. At length the basic ideas of Groseilliers and Radisson had been completely vindicated and adopted, and it was in the logic of this decision that Garry and McGillivray should face north, from Fort William to the colony and so to York.

The two men did not, however, proceed in unison. Simon was a character who would neither forget nor forgive easily, and his pettiness was revealed when he fitted out Garry with an indifferent crew—only to find that as the journey progressed Garry's crew developed to a point at which they out-paced his own chosen men. It was at Norway House that the first properly-constituted Council of the coalition was held. A 'robe of patchwork' was thrown over the Fort William appointments, though some minor changes were made; and plausible efforts were made to reconcile the Indians to the arrangements. The Chief Factors, at last able to put their powers into action,

seem to have enjoyed themselves very thoroughly, and George Simpson astonished them all by his ability to decipher the complex phrases of the Deed Poll, though he was later to confess that even he could not properly understand the clauses on retirement and pensions.

But the Factors had a good grasp of the main problem—the power which the Deed Poll placed in their hands—and before this first Council was over the new constitution was amply vindicated. First, the Factors combined to re-assert the verdict against the St. Lawrence and Montreal. Simon McGillivray and the former agents of the North West Company had ‘chalked out’ an extensive business for themselves as Montreal agents for the new concern, and at Norway House Simon put his arguments that Athabaska should be supplied from Montreal and, with perhaps more justification, pleaded for the trade of Lake Huron, the north shore of Lake Superior, part of Nipigon and Timiskaming. The Factors overbore him, with Simpson at their head, and when at the conclusion Simon registered his protest in a letter to Garry, Simpson and the Council resolved that such a communication was irregular and should not be entered in the Minutes, and parried with a letter of their own in which they claimed this trade for Moose and the Southern Department.

With Simpson, Robertson, Clarke, Bird and Sutherland, all with experience on the Saskatchewan and in Athabaska, to dominate proceedings, the Council spent much of its time on the transport and supply system of the north. The route from Frog Portage (Portage du Traite) to York by way of Nelson River was to be explored, and for this purpose the establishments at Churchill, Athabaska and English River were all co-ordinated into a composite plan. Similar care was taken to get the portages and roads between York and Norway House repaired, to arrange for getting provisions from Red River and the Saskatchewan circulating, and to get the goods from Fort William (still well-stocked and temporarily retained in service) up into the northern system.

Much in the Minutes of this first Council is formal and cryptic. But the competence is as clear as is the determination to vindicate the factory-position of York and to carry into effect the fundamental principle upon which that position must be based. This was a re-organisation of the transport system and the more general use of boats. ‘No effective reduction can be entered into, untill the boat system is established, and the first step towards this economical mode of transport, is the repairing of the portages, discharges and

other impediments by which the navigation is interrupted.' So wrote Colin Robertson, convinced that the excess of servants gave a great opportunity to undertake this work. Simpson had already written much, to the same effect, in his Journal and Report, and the measures accepted were exactly those which Simpson had said he intended to advocate.

Whether the hand of the little Governor can be seen in these arrangements or not, he clearly and competently demonstrated his capacity to 'manage' the Council, and when Simon McGillivray called again at Norway House in October, to find Robertson alone in command of his post, he had little difficulty in convincing that florid but shrewd observer that 'it is not we Factors who have the controlling power over the Governor's'. Simon was then returning to Montreal from York, where he had parted with Garry, who sailed for England in the *Prince of Wales*. The parting had followed another rebuff for McGillivray, but the incident had also confirmed the authority of George Simpson, and as the two directors went their ways, the opportunity to blend into an efficient organisation the new Council system, the vindication of York and the Bay, and the combined resources of both companies, lay in the hands of the efficient little man with just one year's experience behind him.

Simpson's rise to command at this important juncture was due to the Northwesters' dislike of William Williams. The Hudson's Bay Committee had stood fast, and they had even made Williams the senior of the two Governors and had given him a salary of £1,200 a year as against Simpson's £1,000. Like Nicholas Garry, they knew that since the old officers of the Company were 'a pusillanimous, heartless Set of Men and quite unfit for Opposition, though many of them are good Traders'; they owed much to the 'firm, manly Conduct' of Governor Williams. At Norway House Simon McGillivray had gone as far as to state that Williams' exclusion was a condition of the agreement between the two companies, and Garry had been forced to contradict him. But it seemed only sensible, nevertheless, to keep Williams as much in the background as was consistent with loyalty to his interests. Garry appears to have decided on his own that the reasonable solution would be to appoint Williams to the Southern Department instead of the Northern, and so, after a fierce altercation in which he rebutted McGillivray's right to exclude Williams from the more important post, he put the question to Williams himself. The Governor and the Director seem to have been on the most friendly terms, and Williams solved the dilemma by saying that he had always intended to ask for the Southern Depart-

ment and that his feelings would not be at all hurt were he appointed to it. So, although Williams was to remain at York for the rest of the season, the Northwesters in effect carried their point, and thereby completed the ruin of the trade-system which they had built up; for they left the Northern Department supreme, and they left it in the hands of a tireless enthusiast with a passion for detail, a devotion to the boat system, a power to command or cajole, and a breadth of vision which was only matched by his devotion to the Company which he served. He had not created the opportunities which were thus placed in his grasp; but he showed a remarkable power of using them.

There was, however, little of the high flown idealist about George Simpson. His lack of airs probably goes as far to explain his success as do his determination and his vision. Certainly he shared to the full the ordinary life and pleasures of those among whom he worked; his creature comforts mattered to him, his enjoyment of them put him on the same level as the other fur-traders, and his first child by the half-breed Margaret Taylor was born in October 1821, while the meeting at York was in progress.

Simpson, however, was not a man to allow his enjoyment of common pleasures to deprive him of leadership over his fellows. He had shown his mastery in the way in which he had manipulated the Council at Norway House, and there is an even clearer record of the way in which he had smoothed over animosities and antipathies when the old enemies met for the first formal joint banquet at York. Alexander McDougall (Le Borgne) was seated opposite Alexander Kennedy, with whom he had fought a duel in 1813, at Swan River. The Northwester positively dilated with rage; he was just sufficiently master of himself to spit, not on the table but on the floor, and the Englishman appeared equally contemptuous but perhaps a little more self-possessed. That 'plausible and most accomplished gentleman Simon McGillivray' prevented blows between these two old rivals. But for the most part it was 'the crafty fox Sir George Simpson coming hastily to the rescue with his usual tact and dexterity on such occasions' (the description was written after the lapse of many years), who succeeded most effectively in producing the desired effect by 'his stratagems in bows and smiles'. He evidently stood out clear from the ruck; he acted with decision and insight and he was rapidly gaining a comprehensive grasp of the trade which none could rival.

After a couple of months at York, spent with the experienced John George McTavish in checking, stock-taking and planning,

Simpson set off in December up the Hayes River on the ice, for a winter tour of the 'Inner Circle' of his Northern Department. He was at Norway House at New Year with Colin Robertson; and while Simpson showed signs of his capacity to assess character in summing up his host, Robertson also was not far from the mark in his appreciation of Simpson. Robertson's pleasant manners and open liberal views seemed to Simpson to be offset by the suspicion that 'as a man of business he does not shine'; Robertson, on the other hand, mistrusted the 'ease with which all evils are to be remedied'. The Governor relied too much on figures for Robertson's liking. However, Simpson appeared 'one of the most pleasant little men I ever met with, full of spirits, can see no difficulties, and is ambition itself and if he has a fault, he requires the bridle more than the spur'.

The two got a fair chance to form views, for Simpson was a fortnight at Norway House while he recovered from an attack of quinsy. A careless mistake (for which Robertson's character certainly suffered although he seems to have been blameless) led to the Governor's throat being rubbed with acid instead of embrocation! His fortitude is a strong tribute to his character, and he can hardly have been fully recovered before he started out on his journey once more, for he was at Cumberland by the end of January, and he went on to the outpost at Moose Lake in early February. From Moose Lake he made his way to Swan River and the Upper Assiniboine, and so to Fort Qu'Appelle and Brandon House.

It was 'a circuitous journey of about 1,500 miles', and as his route brought him back to Norway House by way of the colony he was accompanied, for protection against the Sioux, by that Cuthbert Grant who had led the half-breeds at the Massacre of Seven Oaks in 1816. During the journey from Fort Hibernia to Brandon House, Grant vastly impressed Simpson and left him convinced that he had not planned the massacre and, further, that it would be a shrewd move to admit him to the service of the Company. Grant's influence over the half-breeds and Indians could then be brought to good use, whereas if he were neglected he might well provoke disturbances. Simpson's personal influence with Colvile, and the subtle way in which he put his proposal, secured his point. Grant was admitted to the service, was allowed to settle at the White Horse Plain to the west of Fort Garry, and was then officially made 'Warden of the Plains' and was elected leader of the Buffalo hunt. In this dual capacity he was of inestimable value to the Company, keeping the peace, preventing illicit trade with Americans, and providing meat for the settlers and pemmican for the brigades of canoes. It was a

generous and yet a shrewd choice of a doubtful man by the Governor.

From Red River Simpson went south to Pembina, and there he met and effected a reconciliation with the Sioux, who were enraged by the half-breed buffalo-hunters. This was a bitterness which broke out every spring and was due to the Sioux claims to the lands over which the half-breeds hunted, and to the irreconcilable hostility of the Sioux and the Ojibways (Chipeways), the latter being normally friendly to the *métis*. Pembina was the danger-spot, and early in 1822 the Sioux appeared about to attack the post, and the *métis* rallied to its defence. Simpson, with difficulty, raised an adequate show of force; for the settlers preferred 'to sneak for safety to Lake Winnipeg'. But he got together a band of about thirty Meurons and twenty other volunteers, faced the Sioux with confidence, and got from them assurances of 'the most perfect amity towards the Company and the Colony'.

The episode was complicated by the presence of a Sioux half-breed, Joseph Rainville, who in 1819 had made an agreement by which he would lead the Company's trade south from Pembina. The Company forbade such a move since the territory under consideration fell within the American boundary. But since the Sioux had been led to hope that a post would be set up for their trade, the agreement was to be retracted with the greatest care. In 1821 a post was therefore set up in the Sioux country, but at Lake Travers, not in American territory, and Rainville was placed in charge with an accountant to help him, since he was illiterate. Claiming some arrears of payment from the Company, Rainville threatened to keep the furs he had traded, and led a party of the Sioux to demand his rights. Simpson lured him to a discussion by flattery, and his achievement in dispersing the Indians and in achieving a long immunity from Sioux threats was the greater because Rainville made them even more menacing than usual in that year. Yet Simpson suspected in the end that both Rainville and his accountant had gone over to the Americans, and he decided to send no more outfits to the Sioux because he thought the Americans would seize the goods.

So as he went down from the colony to Norway House for the Council of 1822 Simpson had strongly in mind the problems of the settlers, of their trade and supplies, their nearness to the American border, and their relations with the half-breeds and the Indians. The Committee had decided that no expenses relating to colonisation should be charged to the fur trade, that the Company should still have the right to trade in the territory granted to Selkirk and should set up and supply a shop for the settlers, should be responsible for

the maintenance of law and order in the settlement, and that the settlement should be used as a means for removing the women and children and the old servants from the trade posts.

Simpson received instructions on these points in the early summer of 1822. But the letters sent out during the discussions which followed Garry's return to London dealt with other matters, of more immediate urgency than the colony. In their letter to Simpson of 8th March, 1822, the Committee told him that they approved a plan to explore the Burntwood route to Athabaska by way of Nelson River, Split Lake, Nelson Lake and the Burntwood carrying-place to Frog Portage. They also said they wished the Nelson River route from York to Norway House to be examined. Simpson had told Colville in 1821 that he proposed to test this route himself, and he expected much from it. The Committee, however, suspected that the Nelson discharged too big a volume of water for passage up-stream to be practicable, and wondered whether improvements to the Hayes River portages and navigation might not be more profitable.

The Committee's letters on these topics had reached Simpson at Norway House in June 1822, and on his arrival at York he reported back to the Committee in substantially the same terms as they had written to him. The route by the Burntwood carrying-place, he wrote, had been examined by an experienced guide who reported that it was safe and that it would save eighteen to twenty days on the route to Athabaska as compared with the existing route by way of Hill River and Cumberland. So favourable was the report that he had decided to order the returns from Athabaska in 1822 to be brought out by the Burntwood route. The trouble of this route was the difficulty of the brigades supporting themselves en route either by their own fishing and hunting or by trading food from the Chipewyans. Control of the pemmican country of the Saskatchewan and Peace River was essential if the Burntwood route was to be made effective, and when Simpson ordered its use in 1823 he also ordered the Saskatchewan posts to lodge a supply of pemmican at Split Lake, for the use of the brigades going out and in.

These steps Simpson took on his own authority; the Burntwood route does not appear to have been mentioned at either of the Councils which Simpson presided over in 1822, nor indeed at the third Council called shortly afterwards. The 'prerogative', as Colin Robertson had feared, lay with the Governor, not with the Chief Factors in Council. And the Governor was liable to gain in authority as he grew in knowledge. Already Simpson could claim to speak with personal knowledge of this vital transport problem, which lay

at the heart of any re-organisation of the Northern Department. For he had travelled by the Cumberland route and knew its disadvantages, and now he went from Norway House to York by the Nelson River. As the Committee had expected, the chief difficulty lay in the volume of water; in normal seasons Hill River would be preferable, but in dry years the Nelson might be used.

Here again, Simpson was reporting to London without the formal support of a Resolution in Council. It was indeed true that in this matter he deferred a definite decision until an accurate survey had been made, and that he had taken several Chief Factors down the Nelson with him. But the most interesting thing about Simpson's handling of his Council on these issues was that his views so closely reflected those which the despatches from London conveyed to him. These considerations applied also to other matters in which he appeared to show a brash self-confidence in these years—especially to the Bow River expedition.

At Norway House in 1821 Garry had received from James Bird a memorandum 'regarding a Hunting Party' for the district between the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and the Missouri. Both Garry and Simon McGillivray were much taken with the proposal, though Robertson refused the command and Bird went no further than a wish that 'more correct information' should be obtained before boats or canoes were sent in. The project appealed particularly because it offered employment for the superfluous hands, and it was the only resolution which Simpson put to the Council which he held at Norway House on 24th June, 1822. He had just received from the Governor and Committee a letter which had resulted from Garry's reports and which told him that 'We highly approve of the plan of sending a Hunting Expedition to the Head Waters of the Mississourie—connected with the trade of the South branch of the Shaskatchuian (or Bow River)', and recommended it for the 1822 season. So Simpson put this one proposition to the Factors at Norway House and with their approbation instructed John Rowand, Chief Trader at Edmonton, to get together a party of servants and freemen, and as many friendly Indians as possible, for the purpose. So Rowand would not waste the summer months and should be ready for action when the brigades reached him at Edmonton in the fall, with the formal resolutions of a full Council.

When Simpson assembled his full Council of the Northern Department at York on 8th July the Bow River Expedition was taken up again; Donald McKenzie was then appointed as Chief Factor to conduct the expedition, with Rowand to act as Chief

Trader. McKenzie was a younger brother of Roderick, and a cousin of Sir Alexander: he had been in the service of the North West Company and then of Astor's American Fur Company. He was one of Astor's men who surrendered Astoria to the North West Company in 1813, and he then re-entered their service and remained with them, although Colin Robertson hoped he might take command of the Hudson's Bay expedition to Athabaska. McKenzie had conducted several parties south from the Columbia into the Snake country, and when a Bow River expedition was first discussed Simon McGillivray said that McKenzie would be the fittest person to lead it. So the move which Simpson pushed forward was in fact not a product of his own brain but had come from James Bird via the Council of 1821, Nicholas Garry, and the London Committee; and the choice of leader stemmed from Simon McGillivray.

Simpson, however, pushed the project with a will. Eighty engaged servants were to be employed, exclusive of officers, and two hundred and fifty pieces of trade-goods were to be sent up. The effective decision was left in Simpson's hands. Not only was he empowered in general terms to 'decide upon whatever steps he may consider necessary to be adopted for the Interest of the general Concern, both at this place and Inland, from the breaking up of this Council until the meeting of Council next year'; he was also directly given the power to 'cause the Establishments of the North Branch of the Saskatchewan District to be abandoned next Spring, in the event of his receiving information from Donald McKenzie Esqre. which may render it expedient to do so'. He was, however, empowered to retain the North Saskatchewan posts if he thought it expedient. Of the prospects of the South Branch expedition Simpson was in fact a little dubious; he thought trade there would always require a strong party, he was not certain whether it was good beaver country, and he was not convinced that it would be possible to break through into the Snake River country and drain that valuable area of its riches. But he had great faith in Donald McKenzie, and he was above all things eager to find some outlet for the men of the North Branch of the Saskatchewan, to send them elsewhere and to give that over-trapped area a chance to recover. To decide on this point, Simpson had determined to make another winter-tour, this time to Ile-à-la-Crosse, Athabaska, Great Slave Lake, Peace River, Lesser Slave Lake and Pembina River, and thence back to the Saskatchewan, where he expected to find a report from McKenzie on the basis of which he would make up his mind about the Saskatchewan posts.

Simpson was already convincing himself that 'the most trifling information is useful at times and can only be acquired by a personal survey of the Country'. But, while fully appreciating—indeed enjoying—the 'trifling information' with which he was cumbered, he also set out the great issues in bold relief. First, as he had come to realise, stood the creation of an efficient working machine in which former animosities were forgotten, extravagance and redundancy were pruned back, and the 'Councillings Business' was so organised as to provide a strong link between the Committee in London and the outposts in the north and west. Second stood the task of supporting and stabilising the colony, and of so knitting it to the fur trade as to provide a source of labour, of provisions and perhaps of boats and canoes, without burdening the trade with costs of administration and defence. Closely allied to this problem lay that of maintaining some sort of boundary with the Americans, for the settlers and the *métis* had already shown a tendency to buy goods from American traders and to sell furs to them. And, fourthly, the American frontier was one of Simpson's problems, further west than Red River too! He saw the Bow River expedition as something of a thrust into territory whose furs went to the Americans, and further west still he was already expecting that Americans would arrive to trade on the Columbia and that expeditions into the Snake Country might run into trouble. Behind and above these four major problems stood the great purpose, to seek out fresh fur-country, to recruit the exhausted strength of over-trapped areas; to secure furs in the maximum quantity, of the best quality, at the minimum cost.

In facing all of these problems Simpson's method was always to gain a first-hand knowledge of the physical details. Travel became a pleasure, a passion and a pride. The speed with which he quartered the vast territory for which he was responsible soon became legendary, and although some of the convictions got from such swift journeys were disputable, he gained immensely in knowledge and in authority.

In travelling, however, Simpson was not only assessing the physical problems. His increasingly caustic comments were directed at the men also, and his judgment of character and capacity became one of his great sources of strength. Already in September 1821 he had seen through Simon McGillivray and had reported back to Colville (to whom he felt the deepest gratitude for his promotion) in approval of the way in which Nicholas Garry had taken his stand against his 'deep designing and I may add dishonourable' opponnets. Already, too, the little Governor had penned his sardonic views of Colin Robertson and John Clarke. The former, a 'luke-warm

partizan' who would like to take up his quarters at Montreal, 'useless speculative and extravagant', would find the Council too hot for him and would not be allowed to squander property to maintain his own consequence. Clarke, also, Simpson found disappointing—he had, indeed, already developed his views on Clarke during his winter in Athabaska—and the robust and healthy Chief Factor was sent on sick leave to Montreal. These were but the beginnings of the penetrating, and often devastating, series of character-sketches which Simpson maintained through his long career of constant travel, and which took final form in the 'Character Book' in which he gave each senior servant a code-number, and then dissected him mercilessly—with Colin Robertson on the first pages described as 'A frothy trifling conceited man, who would starve in any other Country and is perfectly useless here . . . deranging and throwing into confusion whatever he puts his hand to in the shape of business'.

But before Simpson could once more exercise his passion for travel, his desire to see the problem on the ground and to discuss it with those engaged on it, by his 1822-3 tour to Athabaska and the Saskatchewan, he and the whole of the fur-trading personnel were reminded of the conditions under which they worked. The London Committee sent out another Director, and before Simpson set off on his tour he had to attend a further Council at York Fort.

Nicholas Garry had been the first director of the Company ever to set foot, as such, in Rupert's Land. Though a bachelor he was by no means an ascetic, for he always had an eye for a pretty girl or a handsome woman. He had won general respect and approbation, and when he re-joined the Committee in London his knowledge proved invaluable, so much that in 1822 he was elected Deputy Governor. Garry's mission had been an unqualified success, and one of the points on which he had scored had been in showing the interest of the Committee in Selkirk's settlement, both from a moral and from a material point of view. He had taken the chair at a meeting at York at which £130 had been subscribed for the Bible Society, and he had been accompanied on his journey by the Reverend John West, the Church of England minister whom the Committee had appointed to the colony. Garry's genuine interest in these matters was a reflection of the humanitarian spirit of Benjamin Harrison (an active member of the Clapham Sect) and the rest of the Committee; but it was not in itself enough for the needs of the colony. Deep issues remained to be settled, and the Committee decided to send a second director to Rupert's Land, to settle this problem on the spot.

John Halkett was not chosen because he was young, or unmarried, or open and persuasive, for he was none of these things. He was chosen because he was deeply committed to Selkirk's colony and was determined to make it succeed. If Simon McGillivray's still persistent opposition to the colony was to produce change and withdrawal, Halkett was the man whose opposition would have to be overcome. If, as the Committee had decided, the colony must be adjusted, maintained and fitted into the fur trade, Halkett was the man who would most stoutly maintain that decision.

Like Colvile, John Halkett was connected to Selkirk by marriage as well as by interest, having married a younger sister of the Earl. Though he had begun to buy Hudson's Bay stock as early as 1808 and was a substantial holder by 1811, he voted neither in person nor by proxy at the important General Meeting of the proprietors in 1811 at which the grant of Assiniboia to Selkirk was carried in the face of opposition from Alexander Mackenzie and Edward Ellice. But he became a member of the Committee in the autumn of that year, and he was always a steadfast member of the group which rallied behind Colvile in support of Selkirk and in opposition to the Northwesters. He had contributed a telling indictment of the Northwesters to the pamphlet war which followed after the Massacre of Seven Oaks, and he brought a logical and orderly mind to the negotiations with Bathurst and the Colonial Office; the drafts of official letters setting out the case of the colony and the Company were normally submitted to him and often amended by him.

So deeply was Halkett committed to support of the colony that in 1819, when he was himself forced to return to England, Selkirk arranged with his brother-in-law to go to 'America' and see after the colony there. But since it then appeared possible that delay might have some advantages, Selkirk left the date of his visit to Halkett's discretion and the journey had not taken place by the time Selkirk died, nor by the time the coalition was accomplished. But when the negotiations with the Northwesters had reached a conclusion, and when his own responsibility had been emphasised by his position as a trustee under Selkirk's will, Halkett made the journey in 1821. His particular task was to see whether he could get a sound title to those areas of Assiniboia which lay in American territory when the frontier had been settled at the 49th Parallel in 1818. Selkirk had at one time held great hopes of this part of his grant, he had discussed its exploitation by means of an American land-company, and he had urged Bathurst to protect his title to the soil if, for

reasons of state, his land should be ceded in the treaty. Bathurst (with no love for Selkirk) merely acknowledged the communication, and at the treaty the Earl's title to the soil was ignored, whereupon Selkirk conveyed to Halkett his title to the lands south of 49° and urged him to go to the States to establish a title.

Through the autumn and winter of 1821-2, during much of the time when Garry and Simon McGillivray were settling the Company's affairs to the north of him, Halkett was in the United States on this business. His conclusion was based on economic reasons, not on legal or diplomatic points (as Selkirk's conclusion would probably have been); agriculture in America was so depressed that the best course seemed not to press the legal issue until the economic picture changed and there seemed a chance of opening up the land for settlement. This meant that the colony's post at Fort Daer would have to be demolished, and as he went north to the settlement Halkett ordered this to be done, and he must have been on the spot in the colony very shortly after Simpson had left in July 1822 to travel to Norway House.

Simpson did not mention Halkett in his journal or correspondence at this time. But he presumably knew of the director's journey and of its purpose. Certainly the London Committee had Halkett in mind, and when Garry had made his report and had pointed out the difficulties and the persistent hostility from the North West agents with which the colony was still beset, they named Halkett to investigate the colony and to take the necessary action. Garry's mission had convinced them of the value of first-hand evidence and of decisions on the spot, and Halkett as the one person especially concerned was already there. He made his way from the colony to York Fort and there got from the recently-arrived ship his full instructions. Thus instructed and supported, Halkett presented to Simpson and a temporary Council his credentials and their instructions from the London Committee.

Of the three Chief Factors who remained after the departure of the brigades, to form this temporary Council, Colin Robertson had full knowledge and experience of the colony, but John George McTavish and James Keith were former Northwesters whose experience had been mainly in the Columbia Department; to balance them, if necessary, John Spencer joined the Council as a Chief Trader (as the Deed Poll permitted). Spencer was at hand, as Accountant at York; as one of the long line of Christ's Hospital apprentices to the Hudson's Bay Company he had served sixteen years by 1822, and he had included in his service the offices of

Councillor and Sheriff of Assiniboia in 1814 and he had been arrested by the Northwesters and sent down for trial at Montreal in 1818. There could be little doubt that he would support the interests of the colony if there should be opposition.

Simpson also, beginning to acquire mastery of the technique of managing Councils, had his own views of the problems of Red River, views derived from his stay there during the spring, and from his ability at piecing a problem together by a mixture of personal observation and discussion. He had found the settlers, and the trading posts at Pembina, Brandon House and Qu'Appelle, all starving because they were dependent on the buffalo hunts for their provisions. Buffalo were scarce in the winter of 1822-3, but a more important issue was raised by Simpson's realisation that the settlers, the freemen, and even the half-breeds would not venture out into the plains to hunt because they were afraid of the Indians. The Sioux in particular were hostile and dangerous because they were suspicious of the meaning and of the probable consequences of the coalition; and because they were determined to support free traders, supplied by Americans, as an alternative to the monopoly with which the coalition threatened them. This Simpson accepted as the basic problem of the colony, and so it proved. The free traders must be suppressed, and the forces ranged behind them must be countered. The traders were in fact doing little good for themselves, but they were doing much harm to the Company 'by holding out large promises and drawing the Indians from their hunting grounds; this evil must be checked', wrote Simpson, 'otherways our prospects in Trade will be ruined as the very rumour of an opposition is sufficient to disorganise the Indians of the most distant establishments in the Country'.

But it was not only the Indians who lay behind the petty traders, Augustin Nolin, Larance and Forrest. The Meuron settlers would have to be the effective force to bring the Sioux to reason, but they would make no move against the Indians and would not interfere with the petty traders. No Company servant appeared reliable in this matter, and the mission priest Desmoulins (Demouslay as Simpson called him) supported them with the full force of his influence among the half-breeds and freemen. The leaders of the settlement were as indifferent as the common people. James Bird seemed to be devoted only to his 'copper-coloured Mate' and to his own holding; he seemed to Simpson totally unfit for his situation as Chief Factor of Lower Red River, showing no enterprise and neglecting the Company's business, and the little Governor had already decided that John

Clarke would be a better man for the post. Bird would even allow a trade in furs 'rather than have a Row'.

To this apparent indifference Simpson reacted strongly, at least in the private journal which he kept. But in his letters to London he was more circumspect; for he knew that Colvile was anxious to make concessions to the colony. In particular, Colvile had suggested that the Company should carry up goods from York for the colony at a charge of twenty-one shillings a *piece* weighing ninety pounds, and that settlers should be encouraged to open their own stores on their private accounts. This, Simpson thought, would undoubtedly be good for the settlers but was bound to harm the Company since such store-keepers would inevitably begin to trade with the Indians in provisions, dressed leather, and probably furs. So although he reckoned that twenty shillings a *piece* would pay the cost of transportation from York, he offered a three-years' contract at thirty shillings to the Governor of the colony, Alexander Macdonell, and he charged forty shillings a *piece* to Robert Logan although the latter struck him as 'the best Settler about the place without exception'. But Logan had 'the command of a little money', he was the son of a West India merchant, a man of enterprise and improvement, the first settler to run a windmill in the colony. So Simpson traded hard with this early entrepreneur, and his conduct was of a piece with his general fear of the consequences which would flow from allowing the settlers to import and to trade.

But in his letter to the Governor and Committee in London Simpson merely accepted the fact that the Red River shop, as run by the Company, could never cover costs. He then argued that nevertheless it could not be closed for several years yet, since no settler who possessed the means wanted to open a store and those who were inclined to do so had not the funds.

Simpson had firm views on many other aspects of the settlement. In 1821 he had already written to Colvile of the need for more carefully-selected immigrants; the Swiss whom Selkirk's agent had shipped out in that year seemed to him particularly ill-chosen, watch-makers and city-dwellers rather than peasants. They were something of a rabble too, and the colony seemed liable to degenerate into 'a receptacle for free booters and infamous characters of all descriptions', with Canadian and other servants of the Company retiring to it, few of whom were 'well-disposed'. The settlement needed sound government; and Alexander Macdonell and his followers and relations should be replaced in the administration. The two hopeful signs had seemed to be the determination of the

Reverend John West, the Anglican Chaplain whom the Company had appointed to the colony in 1820, and the project of the Buffalo Wool Company. But his stay at the colony in 1822 had revealed defects in John West to Simpson and had shewn that the Presbyterians from Scotland would neither accept his ministry nor assist in building his church and school and in bringing his three-hundred acre glebe into cultivation, as their tenure bound them to do. It revealed, too, that John Pritchard, into whose hands the Buffalo Wool project was committed, was unlikely to make a success of it.

The idea of marketing the wool of the buffalo had been in the air since 1816, and the Hudson's Bay Company had become convinced by 1819 that there might be considerable profit in it. In May 1820 the Governor and Committee entered into an agreement for the formation of a 'Buffalo Wool Company', the first subsidiary company into which the Governor and Adventurers were led since Stephen Evans had saddled them with Valentine's insurance company in the early eighteenth century. The Buffalo Wool Company was to prove as ill-fated as the insurance company. John Pritchard was in London in 1820, and his easy confidence and air of knowledge counted for much. A former Northwester himself, he had joined Colin Robertson in Montreal in 1814, had reported to him the plans for the destruction of the colony and had been sent on an epic winter journey of almost two thousand miles, from Montreal to the colony by way of Moose and York, in the hope of staving off the disaster. He had been at the Massacre of Seven Oaks as a Councillor of Assiniboia, had been made a prisoner and taken down to Montreal, and was a witness at Colin Robertson's trial. It was upon his petition that the evidence of the troubles at Red River was put before Parliament in the Blue Book of 1819, and the Governor and Committee can scarcely be blamed for allowing him to talk them into the Buffalo Wool Company.

Pritchard was no fool. He knew the country, and he had ideas. He thought the settlement would double, by immigration and retirements, within a year; and like Simpson he was sure that it would never prosper until it had a regular form of government. But he struck a fellow-settler (John Allez the surveyor, a man not above suspicion himself) as an idle hypocrite, and Simpson soon wrote him down as 'a poor little Drunken Sot'. The project itself appeared sound enough to Simpson (even in the privacy of his journal) but Pritchard seemed to talk 'a vast deal of Nonsense' about it, and there seemed no hope of his getting the business under way. Simpson's fears were justified, for Pritchard was careless in his weighing and

packaging, he left his bills unpaid, and buffalo wool (if indeed it ever held hope of success) was ruined by mismanagement. Simpson was writing of the imminent bankruptcy of the Company in 1824.

It was, therefore, a small body of men who were not likely to share exalted enthusiasms for the colony to whom Halkett presented his credentials in August 1822. First came Halkett's own commission under the seal of the Company, authorising him to preside in Council. Then came the resolutions of a General Court of the Company, passed on 29th May, 1822, together with a letter from Bathurst giving them official approval. The two Governors and their Councils were given authority over the whole of Rupert's Land, and each Governor in conjunction with only two members of his Council was made competent to administer justice and to exercise the powers vested in him by the Charter. A Governor and Council for Assiniboia (described as coextensive with the territory granted to Selkirk) were then set up, and this Governor in conjunction with any two members of his Council was given like authority within the colony, to administer justice and to exercise the powers given by the Charter. Either of the two Governors of Rupert's Land should, however, take precedence whenever he happened to be in the colony, and when they were actually present for judicial purposes the Governor of Assiniboia was to be suspended.

But although the Governors of Rupert's Land thus took precedence even within the colony, it was clearly recognised that in this effort to bring law and order the colony was the main objective. For one sheriff was to be appointed for Assiniboia while the whole of the remainder of the Company's territories was to be served only by two sheriffs (of whom John Spencer the Accountant was to be one). The disparity, however, mattered little; the Company, with the approval of the Government, was bringing ordered government to the colony and to Rupert's Land, and the Governors in their respective Districts were empowered to enroll and to arm the Company's servants, or others, for the defence of the settlements and protection of the lives and property of the inhabitants. This was exactly the sort of responsibility which Selkirk and the Company had proposed during the struggle with the North West Company and which Bathurst had then so strongly deprecated. Now, however, though Bathurst still decided that it was not 'expedient' for the Crown to appoint officials, yet until royal courts and justices should be set up, the Company's arrangements seemed satisfactory.

As Governor of Assiniboia, to replace the unsatisfactory Alexander Macdonell, came Andrew Bulger 'Esquire'. Actually, Bulger

held the title of 'Captain' and had served with distinction in the war of 1812, where he had shown particular ability in handling Indians. Uncompromising and testy (especially in wine) he was unlikely to make a suave and popular governor. But he was honest and realistic, and in the event he proved a worthy choice.

With so fair a start towards the introduction of sound government at Red River, Halkett called the temporary Council's attention to an aspect of the problem which had made the Governor and Committee particularly anxious. This was the necessity to get men who ought to be discharged from the fur trade to take up land at Red River instead of hanging round the posts, tempting the Indians to trade and inevitably putting something of a strain upon the supply system by their demands. Those with large families, and the numerous half-breed children whose parents had died or deserted them, seemed to be worth getting down to Red River even at the charge of the fur trade since 'if allowed to remain in their present condition, they will become dangerous to the Peace of the Country and the safety of the Trading Posts'. The Roman Catholic Mission and the Church Missionary Society would each care for their own flocks; but the Council was recommended to appoint a Chief Factor or Chief Trader to superintend such migrants, and to make them advances in ammunition and in clothing, to give allotments of from twenty-five to thirty acres and assistance in seed and tools, and to form a School of Industry for the orphan children, who would later be apprenticed to respectable settlers. It must be admitted that in recommending these measures the Governor and Committee hoped that they would permanently relieve the fur trade of a heavy burden at slight immediate cost. But there was also a definite philanthropic motive to be seen: Benjamin Harrison entered into special correspondence with the Reverend John West about the necessary arrangements, and it was quite accepted that the other settlers would not welcome such an influx unless the Company made itself responsible. This the Company was prepared to do and so, for the first time, the clauses of the Charter which envisaged the foundation of a colony in Rupert's Land were to be implemented by the Company itself, as distinct from the sub-allocation of the issue to Selkirk.

So, with the appointment of a sheriff to assist the new Governor Bulger, and the granting of judicial authority to the Governors, the temporary Council resolved that Chief Factor John Clarke should accept responsibility for such dependent settlers. Clarke had returned from leave in Montreal and, as Simpson had intended, had replaced James Bird at Lower Red River. He was ordered to consult

with Bulger; together they were to start the buildings necessary for such families and to give out grants of land in the neighbourhood of Image Plain; and Clarke and West were empowered to use Company's servants for the purpose and also to spend £300 in the first year, to get the settlers started.

Then Halkett and the temporary Council turned from the colony to the fur trade and to the settlement at Pembina. Here Simpson had noted that the settlers had straggled out into a colony about eight miles long. Mostly former Canadian servants of the two companies with their half-breed families, they lived on magnificent land which produced a fine natural pasture and would have been fertile for all crops; they had also the most productive river in North America at their disposal (as Simpson alleged) in addition to the buffalo on the prairies, and so they had paid but little attention to agriculture until the Indian troubles and the buffalo-famine of 1821-2 brought them into straits. Then they began to squat on ill-defined areas, paying little attention to survey and the definition of their holdings, and none at all to the Company's right to the soil. The trouble was that Pembina lay south of the 49th Parallel and was within American territory, as laid down by the treaty of 1818. Halkett, in his journey from the States, had given orders for the colony's outpost at Fort Daer to be abandoned. This was part of his general conclusion that nothing could be made of Selkirk's title to lands south of the frontier, and he regarded the whole of the attempt to claim lands south of the 49th Parallel as 'an unfortunate establishment'. Simpson also, moved by a fear of Americans trading north of the frontier, was anxious to withdraw from Pembina, and the temporary Council ordered John Clarke to abandon the post entirely.

This was going further even than Halkett had suggested, for during his visit to the posts he had ordered the materials arising from the abandonment of Fort Daer to be used for strengthening Pembina. But the Company's anxiety was revealed when the Council went on to resolve that John Clarke should put an immediate and complete stop to the petty traders, from Canada or from the United States, at Red River. The petty traders must be opposed as forcefully as the Northwesters had been opposed in Peace River; in John Clarke, Simpson and the fur-traders rested their hope that the American traders would be kept south of the frontier, and that the settlers would be kept from dabbling in the Indian trade.

These were important decisions on important problems. They concluded Halkett's mission and he came home with the ships of the year. The adjournment of the temporary Council left Simpson

so impressed with the need for a firm arrangement at the colony that he was in doubt whether he ought not to go there, forthwith, himself. Though he was convinced that Clarke would handle matters more firmly than Bird (who was allowed to spend the year on furlough), yet he knew the defects of Clarke only too well, and had Halkett or the letters from the Governor and Committee conveyed any hint that he should spend the winter at Red River he would gladly have gone. But in the absence of any hint or order, and sensing that the Northwesters who opposed the colony already thought he had spent too much time there, he decided instead to devote himself entirely to the fur trade, and set off on a second tour of the Northern Department, this time covering the outer circle of his domain.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE GOVERNOR

While Simpson was bringing his undoubted abilities to the arrangement of the colony and the Northern Department, William Williams, though senior Governor, did much to justify the discrimination shown by the McGillivrays. In the Southern Department his Chief Factors were Thomas Vincent, Angus Bethune, and Joseph Beioley; of these Vincent and Beioley were Hudson's Bay men by origin and Bethune had been one of the wintering partners who had gone to negotiate in London, so Williams' task should not have been over-difficult. But both Vincent and Beioley were firmly entrenched in the routine of the old company and Bethune was slighted and despised by his former associates, and not fully accepted by his new colleagues. The Southern Department, too, had deep problems to solve as the result of the coalition. For a generation, policy had been directed to challenging the Northwesters, and other traders based upon Montreal and the St. Lawrence, by pushing small and mobile establishments ever further to the south. Now the coalition made it possible to reduce such posts, to concentrate the trade at a few well-sited establishments, and to organise the whole trade as an adjunct to the Bay supply-route, to the elimination of the St. Lawrence route.

This policy was set out by the London Committee in its instructions to Williams in 1822, but it was accepted that the coalition had not eliminated all competition from the Southern Department. Though the Northwesters had been absorbed, the free Canadians and Americans remained, and the Committee set out something of a frontier policy in terms which were to echo far outside the limited area of the Southern Department, and were to influence Simpson more than Williams. 'It must not be forgotten', they wrote, 'that this is a frontier and must be made a cover and protection to our own proper Country'. The southern frontier was to be guarded by most carefully sited posts, manned by the most intelligent and active Chief Factors, Traders and clerks, and was to be directed with the most careful and vigilant management. Over the years the problem of the frontier of the Company's trade varied, with increasing emphasis upon American opposition. The immediate means to a solution varied too. But the solution remained constant—to trade or

to hunt the frontier area so hard as to keep competition out from the vast area of 'our own proper Country'.

For Williams' urgent concern, the posts on the north shore of Lake Huron and Lake Nipissing seemed particularly open to opposition, and much would depend on the decision whether they could best be supplied from Moose as part of the Southern Department, or according to the old North West tradition, from Montreal. It had been provided in the Agreement between the two companies that the North West agents should produce a list of all posts and depots before the end of 1822, including the King's Posts which were leased from the Crown, and that the joint Board of Management should have power to destroy any of the posts. So the Southern Department had the task of settling policy not only for the former Hudson's Bay Company's posts but also for the Northwesters' and even for the King's Posts—but the lease of the King's Posts was due to end in 1822, and in the meantime they (and the posts at Lake of the Two Mountains, Lac des Sables and Fort Coulonge) were to be managed by the firm of McGillivrays, Thain and Company, who had succeeded to the business of McTavish, McGillivray and Company.

At the same time the boundary between the Northern and Southern Departments, which had been settled in 1822, was left subject to modification in the light of a decision upon the best method of supply, from York or from Moose. It was decided by the Governor and Committee in London that the posts on the north shore of Lake Superior should be supplied from Moose after 1822; the leases of the Fishing Islands and the Seigneuries of Mingan were renewed for twenty years and were allocated to the Southern Department, and that Department was also encouraged to attract trade from the King's Posts, whose lease was not renewed and which were let to Mr. Goudie of Quebec for twenty years.

The problems could not, in fact, be settled outright; a period of experiment was called for, in which the supply of Timiskaming (from Moose or from Montreal) and the trade of Mistassini were particularly open questions. Endless minor points involving individuals complicated the business of the Southern Department, and Williams showed none of the adroitness of Simpson in managing his Councils. While Simpson passed through his probationary period without adverse comment, Williams found that in 1822 his small handful of Chief Factors presented him with a report (objectionable to him) which revealed that they found his 'domineering manner' unattractive. The differences between Williams and his Council

were over personalities and appointments to posts, over the interest charges on the capital items in the concern, and over the quality of the trade-goods sent out. There was nothing insuperable in any of this, but Williams allowed the Chief Factors to come to a point at which they claimed that, under the Deed Poll, the power of making decisions on major policy rested with them.

The London Committee were not slow to point out the error of this view. 'The final decision of all questions rests with us.' It is true that Colvile told Simpson in similar terms that 'when a subject has been suggested and considered here and with you, and the whole that can be said on the subject considered by the Governor and Committee, their decision is then to be considered final and to be acted upon in good faith and without alteration. There must be a final decision somewhere, and it is settled by the deeds to rest with the Governor and Committee'. But this was a personal letter, not an official reprimand; and Simpson used his arts and his personality to carry the London policy into effective and apparently spontaneous resolutions. So, while Williams stumbled from one difficulty to another until he was recalled, Simpson proceeded smoothly on his way, winning the confidence of both Committee and Council. Yet Simpson made glaring and important mistakes; and Williams was forced to deal with a situation in which the dogmatic orders from London varied from year to year.

'With great deference to the opinion of Mr. Wm. McGillivray' wrote the harassed Governor and Council of the Southern Department, 'circumstances may occur in this Country, that cannot possibly be provided for at home'. But the opinions of the former North West agents carried much weight, and they were desperately trying to rescue something of that project which had brought Simon McGillivray out to Canada with Garry; this was to get the trade of Lake Superior, Lakes Nipigon, Huron and Timiskaming, as well as that of the Ottawa (or Grand) River, managed entirely from Montreal 'for the purpose of putting a clear Revenue of £4 to £5,000 p. annum into the Pockets of his Mercantile House there'. The cheat was so palpable that Garry easily frustrated it in 1821, but McGillivrays, Thain and Company had been left to supply the tail-end of the lease of the King's Posts and the posts at Lake of the Two Mountains, Lac des Sables and Fort Coulonge; they were given the outfit for Lake Huron for 1823-4, and though the Committee allocated Lake Superior to Moose they decided that Lake Huron Department, including Lake Nipissing, Lake Timiskaming and Grand Lake, as well as the Seigneuries of Mingan, should be

taken from the Southern Department and supplied by the former North West agents. At the same time the order was rescinded by which the Southern Department had been told to draw off the trade from the King's Posts when (in 1822) they passed to Mr. Goudie of Quebec.

Williams was engaged against the vast experience and influence of the McGillivrays, and the changes reflect the private interests of the agents rather than a change in frontier policy. The Committee's new purpose was to use the King's Posts and the Lake Huron Department outside the normal trade of the Company, to act as a protective barrier and to bear the risks of competition with free Canadians and Americans. Williams and his Council protested; they protested, too, at the suggestion that a barrier might be created by making a sort of preserve in which the beaver would not be hunted, thus restocking the exhausted region and keeping competition at a distance. There was much sense in their protests. But Simon McGillivray was doing his best to preserve the agency, putting Thomas Thain on the same footing as one of the Governors, securing expense and travel allowances for him, and giving to him the profits on the supply system of a sizeable department.

But though in 1823 Simon McGillivray was able to achieve so much, by 1825 the whole structure had crashed. In August of that year Thain absconded to England, leaving his papers in Montreal in hopeless confusion. In England he was straightway put into a lunatic asylum; and since William McGillivray died just at this time (in October) Simon had perforce to leave his affairs in London and try to straighten things out in Montreal. In London he had been reduced to such straits that he had sold his valuable collection of paintings. Both his interest in the old agency of McTavish, McGillivray and Company and in the London partnership of McTavish, Fraser and Company were causing him acute concern. His contention that the firm of McGillivrays, Thain and Company was quite separate and was only formed, with no agreement or articles of partnership, as a device to transact the business of the Hudson's Bay agency in Montreal and to close the concerns of McTavish, McGillivray and Company, made a distinction which had little practical significance, for all three firms were in equal trouble.

The major concern of McTavish, McGillivray and Company was challenged by Henry McKenzie, a former partner, who denied the right of the McGillivrays to make the coalition with the Hudson's Bay Company without consulting all the partners, demanded an audit of the accounts, and threatened to sue the McGillivray

brothers in the Court of King's Bench at Montreal. Under this pressure McGillivray made a move to adjust the arrangements made in 1821. He wrote that in 1824, in conjunction with Edward Ellice, he surrendered all his present, reversionary and contingent interests in the Company and received instead a block allocation of Hudson's Bay stock, which was at the same time raised in value to £400,000. So the North West agents became ordinary shareholders in the Hudson's Bay Company, the joint committee for management (on which they were entitled to two places) was dissolved, unity of control was completely achieved—and there remained no danger that the Hudson's Bay Company might be involved in the obviously imminent collapse of the Montreal house. Nor could the Company be implicated by McKenzie's claim that the agents of the North West Company had acted wrongly in contributing their goods and outfits to the joint concern, for into the agreement was written a clause by which William and Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice agreed to 'hold the Company harmless' against any claims which might be made against the agents of the former North West Company.

The re-arrangement seemed to be managed in indecent haste but, the Governor assured the General Court, it had taken many months to achieve. The 'coalition' period was over, the Company was a completely unified joint-stock company in which no separate interests had any exclusive rights either in the management of the trade or in the division of the profits. True, the position of the Chief Factors, Chief Traders, Governors and Councils remained as it had been set out under the Deed Poll. They had a right to four-tenths of the profits of the trade, and they had their position, duties and rights, when assembled in Council—a position whose limitations they were beginning to discover. But the fur-trading officers were employees appointed by the Company and subject to rules and changes; safeguarded though their position remained, it did not make them a separate interest in the same way as the North West agents had been, for the latter had had a right to two places on the joint board for the management of the trade and a right to twenty of the hundred shares into which the profits of trade were to be divided. The five shares allotted in 1821 to the estate of the Earl of Selkirk were also re-absorbed into the concern, and the estate was allotted £13,140 in the ordinary stock of the Company. Of the £400,000 stock to which the capital of the Company was to be raised, it was agreed that the two McGillivrays and Ellice should get £175,000, of which £50,000 was to be held on trust, and each of the three agents was to

get a third of the £125,000 remaining. So Simon McGillivray got £41,666 13s. 4d. of stock in the Company but ranked henceforth simply as an ordinary stockholder. Edward Ellice was elected as a Director of the Company, and brought to the Board a knowledge, purpose and political awareness, which proved invaluable. But Simon McGillivray (William being dead), went to Canada as a normal shareholder, fought hard to keep his Hudson's Bay stock from seizure by his creditors, was forced into bankruptcy and eventually in 1830 paid ten shillings in the pound. By that time Simon had been forced to take paid employment as a gold commissioner in South America, and he was only able to make this settlement because Edward Ellice produced a substantial contribution. The creditors of the North West Company were still not content, but their concern was with the surviving agent, Edward Ellice, not with the Hudson's Bay Company, and the long negotiations (which lasted till 1851) passed the Company by.

Coalition had been followed by absorption in 1824, and absorption had given to the Company immunity from the claims and counter-claims, designs and ambitions, of Simon McGillivray. This was, in its way, the logical sequence to the arrangements of 1821, the definite dis-proof of the face-saving assertion that the North-westers had taken over the Hudson's Bay Company and dominated the joint concern. By 1825 Simon was dogmatically asserting that in 1820 the North West Company had been almost ruined—'with reduced means, with a losing trade, and with credit in jeopardy—with disunion in our councils, and defection among our Partners, if not direct treachery in our camp'. It was a shattering admission, but the way in which he faced his troubles goes far to support Colin Robertson's dictum that 'there is a sort of highland pride, and frankness, about the little fellow' which was very attractive. Still, whether proud or humble, Simon McGillivray had lost his influence in the Hudson's Bay Company.

The consequent lack of support for the Montreal agency did not ease the path of Governor Williams. In 1823 he allowed himself to be over-ruled in Council over the appointment of Thomas Vincent to Moose Factory, and the malcontents were arrayed against him. Even with George Simpson he was in difficulties, and got from his neatly politic junior a smart reproof for letters 'showing a studied desire to give offence', while Simpson was adroit enough to shuffle off his own malcontents on to the Southern Department. Williams was plainly losing his grip and commanded no confidence from anyone. As the memory of his bluff activity during the struggle faded,

and as his personal weaknesses became more pronounced (especially a weakness towards Sally Fidler, daughter of the surveyor) it became clear that he must be replaced.

But there was no very obvious replacement at hand. Robertson, Clarke, Bird and Vincent, the old Hudson's Bay men, had all shown glaring weaknesses; and the Northwesters had not shown anyone who could manage affairs, and keep accounts and men alike in order. Only John McLoughlin seemed likely to be of the capacity needed, and he was in command of a venture more important and progressive than the old Southern Department—the Columbia Department on which so many hopes were pinned. So in 1826 William Williams was called home and George Simpson was given authority over the Southern Department as well as over the Northern. In theory, however, the two departments remained separate, and Simpson was merely 'given full authority to give such instructions to the several Gentlemen in charge of these Posts as he may consider expedient'. But the distinction mattered little. Simpson was in effect Governor of both departments, and so he remained until 1839 when the Governor and Committee formally conferred the double office on him.

Already by 1826 Simpson was fully competent to handle the full range of problems now committed to him. Already he had acquired a knowledge of the fur trade, its territory and its personalities, which no one in the Hudson's Bay Company and few in the North West Company ever equalled. The early passion for rapid travel had become a set way of life. The eager novice of 1821 had complimented his guides for getting his outfit up to Athabaska Lake within one day of the Northwesters despite crazy canoes and poor equipment. The newly-appointed Governor had exulted as he pressed forward by cariole and snow-shoe on his winter journey of 1821-2; he got to Rock Depot in four and a half days from York when the journey had never been done in less than six; he abandoned his cariole, took to his snow-shoes, and walked from the Rock to Oxford House in the record time of three and a half days, and so throughout his journey. He obviously derived a simple but very real satisfaction from travelling, and from travelling faster in North American conditions than anyone had ever travelled before.

Simpson had already planned his second tour as Governor before Halkett called him to stay on at York for the extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Northern Department of August 1822. So, as soon as Halkett had departed for London, the Governor set off. But he was too late to get to Athabaska by open water, getting to

Ile-à-la-Crosse on 16th October and being held there by hard weather until the ice had set in, in mid-November. He had, however, travelled up the Saskatchewan in a magnificent boat which McTavish had made for him at York; 'the *Eclipse* performed Wonders' and handsomely beat the light canoes even against head winds. Simpson got from York to Norway House in ten days, and then up the Saskatchewan to Cumberland in three, a journey which completely exhausted his Orkney crew.

Simpson was not, however, a traveller who could only journey by open water, with canoemen and boatmen doing the work and the Governor taking his ease. He had laboriously mastered the use of snow-shoes before his previous journey and now, when the ice had set, he made his way through the winter to Athabaska, to Great Slave Lake, Peace River, Lesser Slave Lake and so back to the Saskatchewan on the last day of February 1823. The journey was tedious and laborious, but highly satisfactory and gratifying; it had given him a great deal of valuable information which would enable the Council to check many abuses and to reduce expenses considerably.

Mackenzie River and the lands west of the Rockies were still beyond Simpson's personal knowledge. But even so there were few, even among the old North West partners, who could challenge Simpson on grounds of actual knowledge by the time he got back to Red River again in the summer of 1823; and they lacked his capacity for over-all planning, his knowledge of the London Committee's approach, and his great self-confidence. So, although Simpson wrote that the Council would now be able to set about reforming the Northern Department, he had not hesitated to put in hand radical reforms of the two great districts of Athabaska and the Saskatchewan on the spot. In due course his actions were approved by Council.

His journey had given Simpson's tough constitution 'a shake' from which he soon recovered, and he felt well rewarded by the way in which he had been enabled to discover and check mal-administration as he went. Tied as they were to the profits of the trade, the officers welcomed his reforming zeal, and he was able to feel that 'all who have a correct view and proper interest in the business in this Country' thoroughly approved of his proceedings. Red River, on his return, was still in great difficulty, for fires had driven off the buffalo, the provision trade had almost entirely failed, opposition trade from Americans and from petty traders still raised serious problems, and John Clarke as Chief Factor of the Company

had got irreconcilably embroiled with Andrew Bulger as Governor of the colony.

In company with most of the fur-traders, Simpson felt (and reported to the Committee) that there was danger lest the colony should begin to make excessive demands upon the Company. The traders appealed to the clause in the Agreement for carrying on the fur trade which guaranteed that the fur trade should not be called upon to bear any costs of colonisation. But although Simpson's services were by now clearly of the greatest value to the trade it was accepted that when he had conducted the 'Councillings business' at York Factory in July 1823 he should go back to Red River and winter at the settlement, albeit with the suggestion that the colony pay part of his salary.

Simpson found the settlers reasonably comfortable, for they had brought home a good harvest. Lack of governance seemed to him, the most serious danger to the colony, for Governor Bulger had decided he could not spend his life there and had left the colony with only the surveyor William Kemp to maintain order.

Robert Parker Pelly, cousin of the Governor of the Company, was appointed to succeed Bulger, while Donald McKenzie was sent up to replace Clarke as representative of the Company. But Robert Pelly, 'a stranger both to the people and the business', did not arrive at York until the ship of the season; Simpson, was already at the colony and in action. As Governor, in fact, Simpson had the right and duty of presiding over the Council of Assiniboia whenever he should happen to be present in the colony, and though he would willingly have allowed Pelly to run the colony, he found himself forced by the inexperience of Pelly and the affability of McKenzie to take the lead during the winter, 1823-4.

It was, in the first instance, his loyalty to instructions from London rather than a spontaneous enthusiasm which led Simpson to devote himself to the colony at this juncture; and on closer inspection he found that the individuals roused as little enthusiasm as the general proposition. Disaffected, bitter, timid, weak, drunken, frothy, inexperienced or corrupt—he castigated the Councillors of Assiniboia one after the other. 'In short there is not one man among them who has any pretensions to the title which he bears.' Simpson brought his orderly mind to the problem and did much to create during that winter a 'Councillings system' which would give to Assiniboia the ordered government and the responsible approach to life which meant so much to him and his generation and which, he rightly thought, were essential if the colony was to survive, and was

to survive as a British possession. For Simpson saw not only the danger of fire and pillage, and of economic and social collapse, but also the danger that some of the settlers (especially the de Meurons) would plunder the Company's store and then join the Americans. There was even a rumour that a party of American troops was expected at Pembina, and the active part which Simpson and the Company's officers were forced to take led in its turn to a rumour that the administrators of the Selkirk estate had sold the colony to the Company—a rumour which was not substantiated for over a dozen years to come, although the goods belonging to Selkirk's estate were taken over by the Company in 1823.

Simpson consoled himself for some of the irritation and boredom of life at the colony by making plans for a visit to England in 1824, from which he hoped to return with an English bride. He had, in fact, left it to Nicholas Garry to put his desires to Colvile and the Committee, and had agreed to accept their decision as to whether he should visit England or whether he ought first to visit the great new area of the Columbia. The Committee chose the Columbia. They showed enough care for Simpson's personal comfort to suggest that he might delay the journey until 1825, so that he might avoid a winter's journey (and also might have more time in which to deal with the Columbia); but this would also have delayed his visit to England by a further year, and Simpson was a man who solved difficulties by speeding up his programme, not by delay. So, when the express letters through Canada had warned him that the Committee were anxious for him to visit the Columbia and that Colvile thought it better for him to make the journey before he acquired a wife—perhaps to inspect Mackenzie River District also—he made ready to go in 1824.

There is little doubt that in advising a year's delay the Committee had in mind the colony and the benefits which a further year of Simpson's care would ensure. Colvile, in particular, was most outspoken—the Governor and Committee, he wrote, 'will not suffer the Fur Trade to oppose or oppress the Settlement, and if it be attempted, the expense of redressing the evil must and will fall on the Fur Trade as in justice it ought'. He insisted that the provision of a Chaplain and of a Governor for the colony were legitimate charges upon the fur trade since they were part of the necessary personnel of the Company, and part of the cheapest way of freeing the trade from the useless families of servants and of the half-breeds. Simpson, therefore, was to treat the colony as a proper demand upon his services; 'I think that having taken the Settlement in

hand that you should not leave it until you see that it is in the right road'.

So warned, Simpson took his own line. Replying a little truculently that the fur traders had every disposition to assist the colony but took their stand on the clause which promised that they should not bear the costs of colonisation, he promised a 'just and honourable line of conduct' to the settlers; but on an immediate issue he maintained the justice of selling them goods at the same prices as applied to the Company's own servants, not at lower prices on the assumption that the sales would be to settlers who would open stores. Then, knowing that R. P. Pelly was determined to visit England in 1825, and that Colvile and the Committee were so determined to protect the colony that it was certain that Pelly's absence would tie him to the colony for yet a further year if he postponed his visit to the Columbia, Simpson began to organise what he hoped would be his last winter trip.

Though he emphasised the 'great hardships and fatigues' to which he was exposing himself when he set out to cross the continent so late in the year, Simpson was now an experienced traveller, in some respects perhaps the most experienced traveller in North America. He did all in his power to minimise the difficulties which his time-table involved, and he worked to a plan which would allow him to get back to the colony in early summer 1825, in time to give the settlers the attention upon which the Committee insisted and then to get out to Canada and so to England. He left the colony in the middle of June, to meet the packet from England at Bas de la Rivière and then to return to Red River and discuss the colony's affairs with R. P. Pelly in the light of the instructions. He carried his proposal to go forthwith to the Columbia against Pelly's wish to have his support in the colony, and set off for Norway House in the hope of holding an early Council there in July. But the Chief Factors were late in coming down from their districts and Simpson was forced to journey on down to York, where he held his Council in due course. He was, however, anxious to be gone, and when the Council was finished and the affairs of the Northern Department concluded for the year he did not wait for the ship of the year but set out on 15th August, 1824, determined to achieve a passage to the Rockies before the rivers froze, leaving the final arrangements for the season's trade to Chief Factor J. G. McTavish, in command at York.

Simpson had delayed his departure in the hope that the ship might arrive, and from the moment of his departure there was a real

urgency about his journey—not merely the virtuosity of a Governor eager to travel faster than any rival, but the serious anxiety of an experienced northerner anxious to get to the mountains by open water. Dr. John McLoughlin, veteran of the struggle between the companies, further toughened since the coalition in the contested area of Rainy Lake, had been appointed Chief Factor to the Columbia District and had departed from York twenty days ahead of Simpson with two light canoes and fourteen men. Simpson also set off in a light canoe, with eight picked men as crew and with his ‘Staunch and Manly Friend and Fellow Traveller, Chief Trader McMillan’ to supply that knowledge of the Columbia District which Simpson lacked. McMillan had been a Chief Trader in the Columbia District from 1821 to 1823, and he commanded even Simpson’s respect as long as he had ‘no occasion to meddle with Pen and Ink’. Simpson was fully aware that the fur-traders as a whole knew very little about the Columbia country, had confined their attention almost entirely to ‘the mere trafficking with Indians’, and were incompetent to take an enlarged view of the area, either in its political or commercial aspect. They were indeed, he thought, ready to throw up the whole area west of the mountains, if left to themselves, and even Simpson was so uncertain and ill-informed that he would not venture, at this stage, a firm opinion on policy or prospects.

Simpson’s *Journal* of this journey has been published, and well-publicised. It shows his gifts and his purposefulness in almost every word. Perhaps the best-known passage is that in which he described the scene when he overtook the slightly mortified McLoughlin. The Doctor’s failure to keep ahead of the Governor was due in part to the fact that Simpson was pressing his crew with that precise object in mind, he meant to join McLoughlin before the Columbia brigade began to climb the Rockies. It was due also to other factors. In his letters, though not in his *Journal*, Simpson had the grace to acknowledge that McLoughlin’s canoes were ‘much laden and weakly manned’ whereas his own canoe was unhampered and in vigorous hands.

The most important cause of McLoughlin’s discomfiture, however, was that Simpson was making a deliberate experiment in the speed and practicability of different routes. McLoughlin had been sent by the normal route through Hayes River, Norway House and the Saskatchewan, while Simpson travelled by the Nelson River, Split Lake and Frog Portage route. He had long been convinced that this was the shortest approach to Athabaska. But he was gambling heavily considering that he had no margin of time at his

disposal, and in the event he might well have regretted his easy optimism. On his very first day, getting from the factory in Hayes River into the Nelson, Simpson could not wait for a gale of wind to blow itself out, his canoe almost foundered and he and his crew were forced to make a portage of fifteen miles in order to embark on Nelson River without doubling the dangerous Point au Marsh. From then on, however, he made good speed through Split Lake to Nelson House, where he hoped to get a guide who would lead him to Frog Portage. But neither the Orkney postmaster at Nelson House nor any of the Indians who traded there knew the route, and Simpson seemed condemned to return to York with no chance of completing his journey that year by the normal Norway House route. Luck however was with him, for while wandering round, sleepless with worry, at three o'clock in the morning he chanced on a stray Indian who led him over a portage and into a river-system which brought him to his goal at Frog Portage.

Here the normal route through Norway House and the Saskatchewan broke northwards into English River District and so, via Ile-à-la-Crosse, into Athabaska and Mackenzie River and Lesser Slave Lake. Here he caught up with John Clarke and the brigade for Lesser Slave Lake though Clarke had left York nineteen days before Simpson; and though there was reason to believe that Clarke's slowness was due to what Simpson called *Domestic* affairs, even McLoughlin had lost ten days to this point, and so Simpson caught up with him in Rivière la Biche on 26th September.

Simpson was convinced he had proved his contention, and that the Nelson River route was certainly quicker for canoes and could easily be made practicable for boats. To his sanguine mind the difficulties were all easily surmountable and the chief defect in the Nelson-Burntwood route was that it gave few opportunities for the brigades to regale themselves as they could do at Norway House, or Cumberland, on the other route. To Simpson this was an added advantage; but he understood why the gentry discouraged the notion, especially as the small proportion of the route which lay through lakes entailed a fall in the time spent at ease waiting for a wind to drop before venturing to traverse a lake. But, though he spent a couple of pages extolling the Nelson-Burntwood route, and concluded with the recommendation that it was quite practicable, Simpson was not really convinced, and though for two years, 1824 and 1825, an attempt to use the new route was ordered, it was then abandoned and Simpson's letters and reports cease to show the enthusiasm which had been so striking before he had himself

travelled that way. The Nelson-Burntwood way, in fact, never became a highway for the fur trade. Perhaps Simpson was defeated by the same difficulty as had faced Turnor and David Thompson before him; the country was devoid of provisions and so, although a light canoe such as his might gain time, a full brigade would either waste days in seeking food or would require large quantities of pemmican which would have to be organised and brought north from the Saskatchewan.

But though Simpson henceforth neglected the Nelson-Burntwood route his imagination had already been captured by a project for a horse-track from Edmonton on the Saskatchewan to Fort Assiniboine on Athabaska River. The distance would be almost eighty miles, and Simpson wrote that he was led to the plan by the ease with which Chief Factor John Rowand had travelled on horse from Edmonton to Fort Assiniboine, and by the great trouble which he had himself met in reaching the Athabaska by way of the dried-up Beaver River. But he had made arrangements for the road before either of these factors had developed.

The road was part of a plan such as Simpson was constantly pondering. From York to Edmonton the Hill River and Saskatchewan provided swift and reliable transport on most of which the cheap and efficient York boats could be used. Simpson planned to use horses to get the outfits from the Saskatchewan on to Athabaska River, 'one of the finest streams I have seen in the Country, the current strong and steady with few rapids except at the Upper parts and navigable by Boats of the largest size'. His object was to divert traffic away from Beaver River, which was difficult for canoes and impossible for boats, and also to combine the brigades for Cumberland, Edmonton, Lesser Slave Lake and the Columbia so as to form a sufficiently strong party for protection against Indian attacks. He worked out an elaborate system (typical of the man) by which a brigade of seven boats with forty-five men would leave York about 20th July. Two men would drop off at Cumberland with the outfit for that place; twenty-eight would drop off at Edmonton and a further nine, having used the horse-road to Fort Assiniboine, would then go on to Lesser Slave Lake with its outfit. This should have left six of the original crew of forty-five, but Simpson reckoned that eight (the number hitherto considered normal and necessary) would then be left to take the Columbia express up the Athabaska and over the mountains. The Columbia District received its supplies by sea direct from London and sent home its furs by the same route; it needed a trans-continental route to get an express packet of informa-

tion and instructions and to get the reports and accounts out to York and to London. By combining the districts Simpson hoped to cut the number of men employed on transportation from seventy-nine to forty-five, and the cost of provisions and administration in proportion. It was a shrewd and well-planned project, which worked well and which the self-confident little Governor put into action before his Council had a chance to discuss and approve it. He reckoned on a certain saving of a thousand pounds a year, and events justified him; the horse-route became an undisputed part of the overland road from Canada to the Rockies.

From Fort Assiniboine Simpson, now travelling more slowly in company with McLoughlin, went up Athabaska River to Jasper House, in its 'beautifully Wild and romantic' setting. This was the summer site for Rocky Mountain House; in winter the establishment moved to Smoky River about a hundred miles north. Deeply though Simpson was moved by the beauty of the scene he decided that Jasper House should be abandoned as the summer post since it served chiefly as a convenience for the Columbia express, and that the winter site for Rocky Mountain House should be moved deeper into the heart of the mountains, nearer to the Height of Land, to Moose or Cranberry Lake, where it would draw the freemen further into the mountains and afford a respite to the lower country towards Lesser Slave Lake. Here again he was turning over in his mind a re-organisation which, he reckoned, would save at least a thousand pounds a year, and which would also regulate and improve the supply of furs.

Simpson was now following David Thompson's route over the Athabaska Pass, and he even came upon the half-breed Jacko Finlay whom Thompson had used to prepare the route. Finlay was now leading a band of freemen; and though Simpson had inherited from the struggle between the companies a reluctant tolerance for free-traders and had even found them valuable on the southern frontier where opposition from Americans was to be met, he would not tolerate them within the Company's territories where they acted as middlemen for the Indian hunters, to intercept their furs before they got to the Company's posts. But though Finlay was warned, and the neighbouring posts were told to supply him no further if he did not cease from trading with Indians, Simpson had nothing but admiration for David Thompson as he and his cavalcade of twenty-one horses made their way over the Pass. 'The track is in many places nearly impassable', he wrote, 'and it appears extraordinary how any human being should have stumbled on a pass

through such a formidable barrier as we are now scaling and which nature seems to have placed here for the purpose of interdicting all communication between the East and West sides of the Continent'. Still his mind was all the time on the Company and its trade. When at the Height of Land he and McLoughlin found a small lake (actually two small lakes) which ran both westwards to the Columbia and eastwards to the Athabaska he named it the 'Committee's Punchbowl', and as he shot the mountain goats and sheep for their unsavoury meat he preserved their skins to see whether they might become 'an object of Trade worthy of our attention'.

It took Simpson six days to 'dispose of the celebrated Athabaska Portage' of a hundred and twenty miles from Jasper House to Boat Encampment. On the west of the mountains, embarked on the Columbia, he found the climate milder and travel swifter. Past Spokane Forks, Fort Okanagan, Kettle Falls and Nez Perces (or Walla Walla) Simpson travelled at a pace of about a hundred miles a day and reached Fort George on 8th November, eighty-four days out from York Fort. Although he had come from Riviere la Biche in company with McLoughlin's slower canoes and had made a detour on horseback from the Forks of the Spokane to visit Spokane House and to discuss with Chief Trader Ogden the affairs of Spokane District and of the Snake Country expeditions which were based on that post, Simpson had saved twenty days on the previous fastest journey to the west coast. Even so, he was not content; 'By taking the Saskatchewan route, however, instead of the circuitous and tedious course we pursued I shall undertake next Season if necessary with Eight men to perform the Voyage in not exceeding two months'. So it would be possible to wait at York until 1st September, to ensure the arrival of the ship, and to arrive at Fort George by 1st November. Dispatches from London could be got to the mouth of the Columbia in four months, and to China in six.

At Fort George Simpson lost no time in confirming his impression that everything on the Columbia appeared to be on too extended a scale *except the trade*. His plans for the reorganisation of the trade of that district, of neighbouring New Caledonia and of the Snake Country expeditions, belong to a separate chapter; he emerged convinced that he could make the Columbia trade highly profitable and a national asset. So enthusiastic was he that he proposed to set off for England via Canada immediately on his return to the east, so that he could be in London by September 1825, could explain his views to the Committee and could enable them to begin the new

régime in 1826 instead of in 1827. The west coast had become his 'hobby' and engrossed his whole attention.

Simpson had always meant (unless countermanded) to hasten to England in the autumn of 1825, but it says much for the enthusiasm which he had generated within himself that he could now write with obvious conviction as though the interest of the Columbia was the only spur. Still, he delayed at Fort George until 16th March, 1825, and then set out on his return journey in company with two boat-loads of supplies for the Snake Country and, once more, with John McLoughlin. The latter was to accompany the Governor as far as Belle Vue Point, the site on which Simpson had decided to build Fort Vancouver, a post to which the supplies and the establishment of Fort George were to be transferred, since Fort George lay south of the river and might one day be declared American territory. He spent but one night at the new post, and spent most of that in 'making various arrangements', christened it by breaking a bottle of rum on the flagstaff, and was off again by nine o'clock on the next day, 19th March.

Even so, it was 3rd April before Simpson reached Okanagan, and that was achieved only by dangerous passages of the rapids in the treacherous light of an early-morning moon. At the Forks of the Spokane he delayed for three days to discuss the removal of Spokane House to the Kettle Falls and to close the accounts of the Columbia Department. He showed a profit of £10,000 on the year's trade on the Columbia and was confident that his reforms would drive the profit up to £15,000 in the next year and that he would double the figure if he were allowed to cross the mountains again on his return from England and to spend winter 1826-7 in personal command.

Jaunty and self-confident as ever, but yet perceptive, he carefully chose the site for Fort Colville at Kettle Falls, to replace Spokane House, and pushed on up-river on 15th April, making good pace despite five men sick of venereal disease—'Chinook love Fever'. 'Our marching', he proudly wrote, 'beats anything of the kind hitherto known in the Columbia'. Paddles, poles and track-lines, vigorously plied for sixteen hours a day, brought him to Boat Encampment and the foot of Athabaska Pass on 22nd April, and he set out immediately on foot, each man carrying about sixty pounds of baggage. Through snow, ice and avalanches, he pushed his party to the Committee's Punchbowl by six o'clock in the morning of 25th—a day when he had started his march at half past three. Himself he led the party; McMillan brought up the rear. And the pace was maintained by sheer spirit. Simpson at one point seized a stick and



SIR GEORGE SIMPSON, GOVERNOR-IN-CHIEF OF RUPERT'S LAND
from a portrait by Stephen Pearce in the Company's possession

thrashed an Iroquois who had thrown away his pack, and at another he took an axe and smashed the rum-keg, destroying any temptation to linger. The horses did not meet the party until the descent on the east side was well begun, on 26th, and by that time every man needed a walking stick, so blistered and cut were their feet.

With the horses came news that Norway House had been destroyed by fire, and Simpson determined to push on with his journey even faster than before. At 'Mountain House' (Henry's Old House where he found again the canoe he had left *en cache*) he was met by dispatches and accounts from all parts of the country, and by the Committee's dispatch of the previous June. But he paused only a few hours before embarking for Jasper House. Here also he stayed only a few hours—enough to decree the abandonment of the post—before he pressed on to Fort Assiniboine and so, trying out the system which he had planned the previous year, by horse to Edmonton, where he arrived on 2nd May.

His crew was now quite jaded, and even Simpson would have indulged them in a few days' rest, especially as the Saskatchewan brigade was not yet ready to start. But after three days spent in settling the affairs of the district, and one evening devoted to giving a dance, Simpson felt quite unhinged with anxiety for the problems created by the destruction of Norway House, scarcity of provisions, failure of the corn crops at Red River, and the demands of an admiralty-sponsored expedition under Captain John Franklin, and he set off again on the afternoon of 5th May. He had previously intended to make his way to Norway House and there to hold a Council of the Northern Department, and he had intended to ask Pelly to meet him there. If Pelly would remain at his post for a further year, it would enable Simpson to go forthwith to England; but he now understood that Mrs. Pelly's health made it unlikely, so he changed plans at Carlton and made for the settlement with the object of talking Pelly round and securing his own journey to England—he also wanted to arrange a purchase of corn from the settlers and to give Pelly the benefit of his advice.

The new plan entailed a journey of eight hundred miles on horseback across plains hunted by hostile Indians. Even Simpson reckoned the journey would take twenty days, and he admitted that it made many think he had taken leave of his senses. Six of his crew were too dead-beat to come with him, but the remaining four and his 'Staunch and Manly Friend and Fellow Traveller, Chief Trader McMillan' determined to come, though worn to shadows, and with four half-breeds he set out.

Their route lay east-south-east, but their guide was incompetent and the route difficult. The horses were used chiefly to carry baggage; only Simpson and McMillan rode, and they for only about three hours a day. For the rest, a steady foot-pace of about three and a half miles an hour was maintained and the days began at dawn with a march of five hours; then two hours' rest, then three hours' march, then rest until four o'clock and then travel till dusk. From Carlton Simpson moved to the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, or Bow River, crossed the Birch Hills and came to Cedar Lake, then across the Plain. Here, in an area of swamps and small lakes, he lost his personal servant and a half-breed hunter, who had gone after a red deer. Simpson knew they had plenty of ammunition and left them to hunt their way out to Carlton or Cumberland while he pressed on past Quill Lakes to strike north-west, waist-deep in mud and water, and come to the headwaters of Assiniboine River within a mile of the deserted North West Fort Alexandria.

Fort Pelly on the north bank of the river was but fifteen or twenty miles distant, but none of his party knew the way and Simpson determined to remain on the south bank and to go direct for the post at Qu'Appelle. So he remained south of the Assiniboine and eventually on 22nd May found himself at the Forks of the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle rivers and forced to cross one or the other. The Assiniboine proved quite impassable and the Qu'Appelle was only crossed by swimming (Simpson 'more at home in the Water than any of my fellow travellers' was first over) and using the horses to tow the non-swimmers. The horses were almost killed and their hides used for rafts, but Simpson saved them and after five hours naked in the mud and water, exposed to myriads of mosquitoes, he got his party safely across both rivers. Both men and horses, however, were desperately tired, and 'never was an unfortunate Gov^r in such a Woeful plight as that of the Northⁿ Deptm^t of Rupert's Land this Day'. It took a further three days to get to the site of the old post at Brandon House, but Simpson was prevented from visiting the house by suspicion that it was occupied by an Indian war party, and with the Settlement still three days' journey away he sent two men to Cuthbert Grant at the White Horse Plain to ask for fresh horses and provisions. Nevertheless he pushed on past Portage la Prairie and then, since no succour had reached them, he and McMillan struggled through a swamp nine miles in length, to reach the White Horse Plain at dusk on 28th May. Cuthbert Grant was absent, and this explained why no help had been sent. But Simpson's messengers had hired an Indian to take a message on

to Fort Garry itself, and soon after Simpson's arrival at White Horse Plain there came men, horses and provisions, from the other direction, sent from the astonished Governor of Assiniboia.

The conclusion of this epic was typical of the whole thing. Hungry and weary though he was, Simpson hardly paused to refresh himself, flung himself across his old charger, Jonathan, and was off on the last gallop. He thundered on the gates of Fort Garry at about midnight and so ended 'one of the most dangerous and harrassing Journeys ever undertaken in the Country through which thank God I have got with no injury or inconvenience worthy of Notice'. It was a Grand Stand finish, unnecessary in itself but flamboyant and bound to win applause. In Simpson's writing it never figures as anything more than a simple (and rather boastful) statement of fact. But the last gallop to Fort Garry was evidence of the natural leadership and power of the man. It was just the kind of bravado which appealed to those whom he had to lead and to dominate. Who, even of the hardest-bitten fur-traders, would dare to challenge a man who could make such a journey, and finish it in such style?

Even Simpson was exhausted enough to admit that he was 'low upon it' and to promise himself a week's rest, dealing with the discontents of the settlers and the problems of the settlement, before he set out again to hold Council at Norway House. He found Pelly determined to go to England, for his wife's life and reason were in jeopardy. But Simpson was determined to visit London, to put his Columbia Dispatch before the Committee in person. So he and Pelly agreed to travel together and to leave the settlement in the hands of Chief Factor McKenzie, who had won much praise by the support he had already given to Pelly. Before he left the colony Simpson received the packet of dispatches from London, and was gratified to find that while the Committee as a body had voted him a gratuity of £500 and an annual increase in salary of £230, several members as individuals had written to him in the most friendly and approving manner. Colvile and Garry would be among the number, and it is probably fair to guess that the Governor, J. H. Pelly also expressed his approval. So, while Simpson was gaining in knowledge and authority in North America, he was also gaining in influence in London.

There was the necessary quorum for Simpson to hold a Council at Norway House when he got there on 13th June. But by further letters which he received there (the dispatches of the previous summer, for which he had not waited at York) he learned that

McGillivrays, Thain and Company, had already been ordered to send a shipload of goods to the Columbia early in the summer of 1826. Since part of the urgency of his visit to London lay in his intention to modify such shipments, the knowledge that for at least one further year there could be no effective action allowed him more leisure. He held only a Temporary Council at Norway House, concerned to set McKenzie in office at Red River, and then went on to hold a full review of his Department in Council at York Fort in July. The counselling took a full week, and the Minutes clearly reveal the ordered mastery with which Simpson took his Council through the business. The idle and defective (such as Colin Robertson) were reproved, the detailed returns were analysed, appointments and arrangements were made for every district. Religion and morals received attention alongside the rules for loading boats, for trading dogs and horses, and for selling supplies to the Red River shop. Over it all there was clearly a mind which could see the interaction of one problem upon another, the relation of one district to another, and could over-ride local and personal interests to secure the profit and stability of the whole department.

But though the mastery cannot have been concealed, the Governor was gladly accepted. The counselling concluded when, spontaneously but with perfect unanimity, 'equally unmoved by flattery as uninfluenced by example', the assembled Chief Factors and Chief Traders turned to congratulate Simpson on the able way in which he had presided over them, on his safe return, and on the changes which he had wrought in the business. The economies planned during his inland voyage of 1822 and those expected from his journey to the Columbia were especially mentioned, and the Council put on record their approval of Simpson's determination to visit London and to put his Columbia plans in person. This perhaps was what Simpson wanted. For the act of approval was really addressed to the London Committee 'in the fond expectation that the Honorable Committee will permit this blunt and unvarnished expression of our sentiments, to be recorded in the Minute Book of their Honourable Board'. Simpson was aware that there were those on the Board (including Colvile) who were watching to make certain he did not sacrifice the colony to the fur trade, and who thought he should stand by the colony during Pelly's absence. Such a consideration was not, of course, mentioned in Simpson's acknowledgment to the friends whose support, he rightly said, was an essential part of his success. But he was candid enough to admit that 'The toils of business are to me a pleasure' and that 'I am at the summit of my

ambition in the place I hold'. Secure in the confidence and esteem of the fur-traders, he meant to devote himself to the trade; and it was with their full support that he sailed for London.

Marriage was probably still in his mind as Simpson sailed from York, for a fair proportion of the Council's proceedings had been taken up with laying down rules 'That no Officer or Servant in the company's service be hereafter allowed to take a woman without binding himself down to such reasonable provision for the maintenance of the woman and children as on a fair and equitable principle may be considered necessary not only during their residence in this country but after their departure hence'. Further 'That the parent be encouraged to devote part of his leisure moments to teach his children their A.B.C. Catechism together with some short appropriate Prayer to be punctually repeated on going to bed'. But Simpson had no intention of entering upon a formal marriage with Margaret Taylor, his own 'bit of brown'. He was always deeply conscious of the falling off in enterprise, and the development of idle and often jealous habits, which followed too deep an attachment to a 'swarthy idol'; and he had already marked many such cases. The Company's interests soon became a secondary consideration, 'the Gentlemen become drones and are not disposable in short the evil is more serious than I am well able to describe'.

There was in Simpson's approach to this problem a mixture of the bawdy and the businesslike. He wrote of his fears that Margaret might be free in her favours in his absence in the same tone as he wondered whether the blacksmith might make a girdle of chastity for her, and recorded that 'had I a good pimp in my suit I might have been inclined to deposit a little of my Spawn' among the camp-followers of Ile-à-la-Crosse. He suspected he was earning a reputation for plurality of wives, and he secured a separate private entrance to the Governor's quarters in the new buildings being erected at York Fort. For himself he was quite uncompromising: 'I do not wish to be troubled with a Lady during the busy Season', and 'if you can dispose of the Lady it will be satisfactory as she is an unnecessary and expensive appendage. I see no fun in keeping a Woman without enjoying her charms which my present rambling Life does not enable me to do'. There is therefore little cause for wonder that Simpson, though he acted as a responsible parent towards his half-breed children and even got Margaret Taylor's offspring baptised by the Reverend John West at Red River Settlement, nevertheless never entertained the thought of marriage with her. He was, indeed, prepared to carry his cynicism on into suspicion that the missionary

was as human as the fur-trader in such matters: 'Parson West and Miss —— were encamped in Knee Lake when I passed', he wrote of his 1822 journey, 'he will Certainly take the Shine out of her before the unfortunate Clerk gets possession'. Simpson was never sympathetic to West, in any case; he found him evasive and unsatisfactory, he differed from him on important points of policy, he was so realistic that he concluded that the Roman Catholic Mission was more effective than the Anglican in the conditions of Rupert's Land and Red River, and West was firmly and unequivocally sacked in 1824.

But although Simpson was thus cynical in his approach to the problems of marriage, he intended to seek a wife, and in asking him to postpone his visit to England until after he had visited the Columbia Colville had suggested that 'A wife I fear would be an embarrassment to you until the business of those distant journies is over and if it be delayed one or two years you will be able to accumulate something before the expenses of a family come upon you'. There was no secret about the Governor's desire, and he had by 1825 fulfilled the prescribed conditions. But although he certainly wrote to his old friends in England he was not at all assiduous in visiting them, and he had in fact very little time to spend in choosing a bride, for he reached London towards the end of October 1825 and set sail again from Liverpool at the end of the following February. During the intervening months he was completely taken up with Company affairs and seems hardly to have given a thought to his own interests.

Though his insistent desire to return to London without delay in 1825 was spontaneous, Simpson found that it fitted admirably with the Committee's needs and wishes, for on his arrival in London they were deeply engaged in discussing with the government those very matters upon which Simpson was, without any doubt, the most recently experienced and best-informed man in the world. The uncertain boundary with the United States had been under discussion even before Simpson had started on his journey to the Columbia, and Simpson had written at that time of 'our present uncertain tenure of the Columbia' and had planned the abandonment of Fort George on the assumption that any territory south of the river would go to the United States and that it was useless to preserve Fort George for 'people who we regard as enemies in every point of view'. Even after he had seen the situation himself and had realised how weak and unorganised the American challenge was, and how promising the Columbia territory was, he still worked on the assumption that

the Americans would probably make good their claims to control the mouth of the river, and access to the interior by the route of the Columbia. Therefore his long-term plan for developing British (i.e. Hudson's Bay Company) trade to the west coast was built round Fraser River and New Caledonia rather than round the Columbia and its territory.

The Governor and Committee do not seem to have taken Simpson into their confidence over the American boundary though they told him, in March 1824, of the possibility of an agreement with the Russians and also warned him that discussions with the Americans were on foot, and his report would perhaps be sent to the Foreign Secretary. But neither the Committee nor Simpson were prepared to yield possession of the Columbia as quietly and effectively as in their private minds they thought was inevitable. When Simpson arrived in London discussions had reached a stage at which the Governor and Committee were prompting Canning, Foreign Secretary in Liverpool's ministry, to claim a boundary which would give the British a right to navigate the Columbia and which would run along the Height of Land in the Rockies at 49° (the agreed line across the Prairies) to $46^{\circ} 42'$, where Lewis and Clark crossed the mountains, and so westwards to the Columbia along Lewis's River (the Snake). In the event, Canning put forward only a modification of this proposal, but he listened attentively to the Company's observations, incorporated many of their phrases and ideas into his memoranda and dispatches, and seized on the opportunity when told that Simpson was in London and would supply any information on the Columbia which Canning might require.

It was H. U. Addington, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, not the Minister himself, whom Simpson was called upon to see and, despite his moves in the other direction, he concluded that use of the Columbia was necessary if the Company was to trade profitably, or indeed at all, on the western side of the Rockies.

The problem of the American frontier on the Columbia was not settled by the time Simpson left England in February 1826—indeed, by stiffening the British attitude he had done much to delay settlement. But decisions could be taken within the Company more rapidly than they could between two rival governments, and the Committee had taken a vital step towards consolidating the whole of their trade and territories under Simpson's rule. Just as he left London for Liverpool, on 26th February, 1826, the Committee wrote to recall William Williams from his troublesome command.

Considerable changes were envisaged, and Simpson was to give such instructions as he thought fit to the affairs of the Southern Department.

Simpson's plan to return forthwith to the Columbia was therefore delayed. His appointment of McLoughlin to that department was welcomed but, although he did not receive a formal appointment to command the Southern Department, and no addition to his salary (bringing it up to the magnificent figure of £1,800 a year) until the following December, it was made clear to him that the Southern Department had an immediate need of his services. As Governor of both the Northern and the Southern Departments of Rupert's Land he was in a position of unprecedented authority, and he had behind him quite unprecedented support from fur-traders and Committee alike, and unrivalled knowledge and ability to call forth such support. By 1826 George Simpson still had not travelled the Southern Department, Mackenzie River, or the coast north from the Columbia. But he knew Rupert's Land as no one had ever done before, his knowledge was based on ability to master paper-work, to elicit information from his companions, and to travel fast and with a seeing eye. He had not brought back a bride from England; and his travelling days were by no means over although he could not immediately set about a tour of the Southern Department.

Coming up to his territories via New York, Montreal and the long canoe route formerly taken by the Northwesters (and by himself on his first journey in 1820), Simpson passed Fort William and reached Red River on 1st June, 1826. There he found that the first of a disastrous series of floods had fallen upon the colony. The melting snows had been held by ice and debris at the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine Rivers, and both had burst their banks. But though he thought the disaster would rid the country of many of the helpless, the depraved and the idle, and he offered passages to Canada and ammunition and fishing tackle to those who wanted to make for the United States, he thought the Scots were so attached to the soil that they would not desert it without another struggle. So it proved—a nucleus of determined settlers, perhaps three hundred souls, remained in the colony, and Simpson paused in his journey north to comfort and organise them.

It was 13th June before Simpson reached Norway House, and the 26th before enough Chief Factors had come down from their posts to make a Council. Then on to York in August, not to hold a Council but to see J. G. McTavish, instruct him in the arrangements of the outfits, and settle the business which followed the arrival of the ship. Then back to Canada again, to arrive at Lachine in October,

traversing again the whole long route so that he might give his personal attention to arrangements for the trade of the Seigneuries and the King's Posts.

He had already given some thought to the losses incurred in the Seigneuries of Mingan and Portneuf and to the way in which this branch of the trade was managed by McGillivrays, Thain and Co., and had discussed with his Council the problems of the Montreal agency. He had also been approached by several of the former winterers of the North West Company, anxious to secure his interest and his business capacity to get a satisfactory statement from their former agent. Some of them wished to give him a power of attorney to act on their behalf in Canada, while they empowered the Committee so to act in England. Simpson accepted the charge; it was another point on which he had confirmed his leadership of the whole fur trade and had routed any rivalry from Simon McGillivray, or anyone else. He pretended sympathy for Henry McKenzie's complaints against McGillivray and sent the papers forward to Colville. But he explained that he did this in order to find out whether a Chancery suit was really brewing up, and whether the Company could possibly be involved.

Unadventurous though his winter may have been, it increased his stature, his knowledge and his power, and in the spring of 1827 Simpson was off to the north again, to hold his first meeting of the Council of the Southern Department at Michipicoten and then to journey on and hold the Council of the Northern Department at York Factory on 2nd July. That done, he set out, still in July, to tour his Southern Department. Leaving York in a light canoe, he went by way of Lake Winnipeg and Winnipeg River, up English River to Albany River. Here he visited Osnaburgh House and passed on down to the Bay at Albany. From Albany he travelled on to Moose, where he spent some three weeks in mastering the paper-work of this department, a task which he had completed in time to send home a detailed report by the ship of the year; after which he took the route by Abitibi and down the Ottawa River, to winter once more at Lachine.

This earned a reproof from a Committee who did not want to lose such a paragon of a Governor through sheer recklessness. 'Your friends in the Committee are not quite satisfied with your proceedings, as they consider that you run more risks and exert yourself more than is absolutely necessary for the service, allow me therefore to recommend you to take more care of your health and not expose yourself unnecessarily; on this subject you may shortly expect a

jobation from your sincere friend the Deputy Governor' (Colville). The warning was sent from London in December 1827 and reached Simpson during his winter of comparative leisure at Lachine. It did not prevent him from continuing his voyages. In the next year, 1828, he again managed to hold the Council of both the Northern and the Southern Department in July, the one at Michipicoten and the other at York. Then he was off on his second visit to the west coast.

This time there was no question of Simpson using the Nelson River and Burntwood route which had so preoccupied him on his previous journey to the Columbia. His object was to explore New Caledonia rather than the Columbia Department, and his particular purpose was to discover whether Fraser River would provide access to the coast in case (as seemed possible in 1828) the negotiations with the United States should conclude in an agreement which prevented British subjects from using the Columbia. Simpson in 1828 was therefore concerned to probe a northerly route from the coast to the interior, and a northerly pass across the Rockies to reach the headwaters of Fraser River. With so much emphasis on moving north away from American contacts, his failure even to discuss the Nelson-Burntwood route is a remarkable tribute to his capacity to learn by experience. He embarked from York the very next morning after the 'councillings business' was over, at one a.m. on 12th July, took the orthodox Hayes River route to the new Norway House which had been built on Jack River, and went by Cedar Lake to the Saskatchewan and up to Cumberland.

The much-travelled Governor was thoroughly at home in his territory, and could record such a journey with the utmost brevity—'Nothing of material interest presented itself during this part of the Journey'. From Cumberland to Ile-à-la-Crosse, over Portage la Loche into Athabaska and down to Fort Chipewyan, Simpson made good time. He had covered the distance from York Fort in thirty-one days and he indulged his men in two or three days' rest at Chipewyan while he discussed the affairs of the Department of Mackenzie River with Chief Factor Smith. He resumed his journey on 14th August, up Peace River to Fort Vermilion and Dunvegan, past Old Rocky Mountain House to Peace River Pass, about which Simpson says nothing in his journal. It was, however, some of 'the worst road in Christendom', it had not been used at all for the past three years, and the crossing took Simpson and his party three hard days' work. So they proceeded to the source of Peace River, which they had followed for about a thousand miles and on which they had spent twenty-nine days.

Then from Trout or McLeod Lake, one of the sources of Peace River, they were forced to travel on foot, the Governor on horseback with his two companions (Dr. Hamlyn destined for Fort Langley and Chief Trader Archibald McDonald, author of *Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to Pacific by the late Sir George Simpson*). They were now in the easternmost parts of the Department of New Caledonia, but they had to cross something like a hundred miles of country (which took them five days) to get to Fort St. James on Stuart Lake and so to one of the sources of Fraser River and the western watershed of the continent.

Here Simpson was met by Chief Factor William Connolly, in command of the 'New Caledonia section of Columbia Department', who had come up with the outfit from Fort Vancouver. With Connolly Simpson set out the year's arrangements for the district, and he tried also to establish the best means of transport between Stuart Lake and the coast. When told that John McDonell, the clerk in charge of the post at Fraser Lake had once caught a glimpse of the Pacific he decided that McDonell 'was more indebted to the fertility of his imagination, than to the clearness of his vision for that discovery'. For himself, he was determined that he must explore both Fraser River and Thompson River; neither route had ever been thoroughly examined, and he was convinced that the Committee must be put in a position to speak with authority when the British government next asked what line to take with the United States.

The double project was put into effect when, three hundred miles downstream from Stuart Lake, Simpson's party came to Fort Alexandria. Here Simpson sent James Murray Yale and fourteen men in two canoes down the Fraser—a journey which Yale found a safe and good navigation for the next three hundred miles, to the Forks of Thompson River, where Simpson again joined him. Simpson himself, in the meantime, struck off in a southerly direction on horseback, by a difficult and dangerous route which brought him in eight days to Kamloops on Thompson River. The post was normally reached from Okanagan, a distance of about three hundred miles by horses, and its chief function was to act as an entrepôt and garrison for the New Caledonia outfits going up by this tedious and costly route. The arguments in favour of finding a satisfactory water-route to New Caledonia were clearly strong. But when Simpson, having got a boat hastily built for him, set off down Thompson River, he soon found the defects in the 'deep rapid Serpentine River'. 'There was no comfort in the whole passage of this turbulent River', and Simpson decided that access to the interior by Thompson River was

impossible, and if the Company lost the right to use the Columbia all access to the coast would be cut off.

Although the Fraser had been kindly to Yale and his party from Fort Alexandria down to the Forks, Simpson found that from the Forks onwards it seemed to get more dangerous and alarming with each successive reach. Tossed into rapids and whirlpools in his water-logged canoe, he emerged with the conclusion that 'Frazers River, can no longer be thought of as a practicable communication with the interior; it was never wholly passed by water before, and in all probability never will again. . . . I should consider the passage down, to be certain Death, in nine attempts out of Ten'. The loss of the Columbia would therefore be ruinous, and even Fort Langley at the mouth of the Fraser (which he reached on 18th October) struck him as quite inappropriate as an alternative to Fort Vancouver if the Columbia had to be abandoned.

From Fort Langley Simpson went downstream in boats (changing his earlier plan of returning up the Fraser to the Forks of Thompson River and then going overland to Okanagan) and hit the coast in the Gulf of Georgia and so by the coast to a neck of land between Puget Sound and the Columbia. Here the party burned their boats to prevent their falling into the hands of the Indians, crossed the Cowlitz Portage of about sixty miles and, getting canoes from the Indians, reached Fort Vancouver on 25th October, 'having between that Date, and the first of May performed the longest Voyage ever attempted in North America in one Season, about 7,000 Miles'.

John McLoughlin had achieved great things in the Columbia Department since Simpson's previous visit, and Simpson's report on the trade and organisation of the department, the Snake Country expeditions, American and Russian rivalry, shipping and the coastal trade, lacked nothing in grasp and knowledge, or in the optimism which was so often a feature of Simpson's reports. But before he left the coast on 25th March his confidence had been severely shaken by the wreck of the *William and Ann*, which had run aground in crossing the Columbia Bar and broken to pieces. Her cargo of goods from England was lost, and the survivors of her crew were butchered at the Clatsop village when the Indians were assembled there in such numbers, and so well armed, as to make a punitive expedition risky. The tragedy raised many problems of prestige and of international rivalry—for the American captain Dominis refused to help avenge the murders or even to discontinue the sale of guns and ammunition to the Indians for more than one day—and it also left the Columbia

Department short of goods, and deranged Simpson's plans for the coastal trade.

Simpson's confidence, was, however, to some extent restored during his return journey to Red River. This he accomplished in sixty-six days, travelling by way of Nez Perces, Okanagan and Fort Colville, then over the Athabaska Pass and down to Fort Assiniboine, by horse to Edmonton, by boat to Carlton, horse again to Fort Pelly and then by canoe down the Assiniboine to the colony. The Indians assembled to meet him as he went, and he was everywhere told that the American parties were in great distress, short of ammunition and goods and ready to withdraw south of the Missouri.

The Governor made this journey in a style fitting the stature to which he had grown. He had with him his keen and efficient private secretary, Donald Ross. His personal servant Tom Taylor had, as Simpson had expected, hunted his way to the Company's posts when he had been lost and left behind on the 1824-5 journey, and he, too, was with the Governor now, to act as cook and valet. Another personal servant was the piper Colin Fraser, whom Simpson's father had recruited at the Governor's request in 1826. The young Scot was as yet unaccustomed to Simpson's methods of travel, he was 'a piper and nothing but a piper', and was sometimes so exhausted on the journey that he had no wind left to pipe with. But he was supposed to be an assistant servant to the Governor, and he added an atmosphere to the journey which made it something of a royal tour. Piping up on occasions as the canoes or boats slipped through the lakes and rivers, or by the camp-fires in the evenings, Fraser also played a full part in the ceremonial approach to the posts. In full Highland costume he marched between the guide bearing the 'British ensign' (probably the Company's flag) and the Governor, playing Highland marches which must have stirred the souls of the Scots at the posts, and must have moved the Indians deeply too!

Simpson now travelled in state by himself in one canoe at the start of the journey while the rest of the party used another, and his canoe was 'the most beautiful thing of the kind I ever saw; beautiful in its "lines" of faultless fineness, and in its form and every feature; the bow, a magnificent curve of bark gaudily but tastefully painted, that would have made a Roman rostrum of old hide its diminished head. The paddles painted red with vermilion, were made to match, and the whole thing in its kind, was of faultless grace and beauty—beauty in the sense of graceful and perfect fitness to its end'. So wrote Archibald McDonald, who merely reflected the general admiration.

The pomp with which he surrounded himself could not, of course, shield Simpson from the rigours of such a journey, and although he was still on the right side of forty by the time he had got back to Red River in 1829 he was beginning to feel the wisdom of warnings against exposing himself too easily. Though the Fort Garry Journal recorded that Simpson and his party had 'arrived from the Columbia all in Good Health', Simpson wrote to Colvile that 'My Health is not bad, but still I am never perfectly well and I find that exertions which were formerly but exercise for me are now fatiguing, indeed my snow-shoe walk across the Mountains and overland journey from Saskatchewan have wrought me a good deal; a trip to England I think might be of service to me and I am in hope the Committee have by their Spring Dispatch authorised me to go home in the Fall, indeed I think it will be proper for me to go whether they have or have not for the benefit of Medical advice'.

First, however, the Governor had to conclude the year's business of his two departments. He spent only a week at the settlement, till 6th June, when he set out to meet the express canoe from Canada at Bas de la Rivière. Then from 22nd to 26th June he held the Northern Council at Norway House, worked back through Fort William to Michipicoten and so to New Brunswick House and Moose, where he stayed for a fortnight and held the Council of the Southern Department, left Moose Factory on 13th August and so arrived via Abitibi, Fort Coulonge and Lake of Two Mountains, at Lachine on 27th August. He spent almost a month at Lachine and Montreal, and sailed from New York for London on 24th September, to be introduced to the Committee on 21st October. This was travelling and counselling with a vengeance, coming on top of his winter journey. He had now visited all of the Company's territories except Mackenzie River (and even on that district he had enjoyed long discussions with Chief Factor Edward Smith—better than volumes of correspondence). None now would dream of voicing Colin Robertson's earlier view that this was 'one of the most pleasant little men I ever met with'; certainly not Robertson, who was at that moment revealing to the Governor his vulnerable mixture of imagination and incapacity by planning a Winter Road from York Factory to Lake Winnipeg, and making a complete failure of the practical work. The pleasant little man was a formidable Governor by 1829; it was generally accepted that though the Councils consisted of the Governor and such Chief Factors and Chief Traders as might be present 'The duty of the latter is to sit and listen to whatever measures the Governor may have determined on,

and give their assent thereto, no debating or vetoing being ever thought of; the Governor being absolute, his measures therefore more require obedience than assent'.

But the absolute Governor was on pleasant enough terms with the individual members of his Council. He was even ready to praise Robertson for the abortive work which he had put in on the Winter Road, and he arranged for two of the factors to accompany him to England. These were Chief Factor James McMillan, his colleague on the journey to the Columbia who had then established Fort Langley in 1827 and had accompanied Simpson back across the continent from New Caledonia; the other was Chief Factor J. G. McTavish, the former Northwester who had managed York Fort and the depot business of the Northern Department ever since the coalition. With both Simpson was on the closest terms, and all three were travelling with the same purpose. For though Simpson wanted to come home for medical reasons, and to put his views on New Caledonia and Fraser River before the Committee, he was now determined to bring back a wife.

A trifle lame, and describing himself as an invalid, Simpson stayed in London till the end of the year and then moved north to visit relations near Inverness. On his return to London he announced his engagement to his cousin, the daughter of Geddes Mackenzie Simpson, the uncle who had brought Simpson to London to work in his counting-house. The eighteen-year-old Frances Simpson, sweet, utterly charming and quite unsophisticated, was married to the balding bustling little Governor, over twenty years her senior, on 24th February, and it was a happy party which crossed to America, for McTavish also had won his bride. Simpson took Frances through Canada to Lachine and Red River, and so to York for the Council of 1830, and back to Red River again. His wife, by her very existence, was bound to stir up some trouble among those who had taken Indian or half-breed wives, for both Simpson and McTavish 'pensioned off' their 'old concerns'.

The Governor and his lady were necessarily somewhat isolated, for this as for other reasons, in the narrow society of Red River, and Simpson seems to have been irritated by the isolation. But, making allowances for the feelings of those who took his rejection of a half-breed mate as a slight upon their own wives, Frances Simpson appears to have given him a hold upon many loyalties which had eluded the irritatingly efficient bachelor. 'I do not recollect ever to have met with so much perfection unmixed with any alloy' wrote John Stuart; and Frances Simpson does not appear to have felt the irksomeness of the

situation to anything like the same extent as her husband. Her gentle presence went far to make the situation easy, and even the Governor condescended to give 'two or three grand let outs', so that James McMillan agreed that 'Mrs. Simpson's presence here makes a change in us'.

Marriage and advancing years had completed the development of the Governor. He had by no means ceased from travel. Tours to Norway House, to York, Cumberland, Moose and Michipicoten fill his years and pass almost unnoticed. He had mastered his territories, most of the arrangements could be settled by correspondence and by calling the traders to Council, and the details and arguments were all set against the intimate and accurate knowledge which the Governor had gained. He was later to travel to St. Petersburg and then to Berlin and Hamburg to conclude agreements with the Russian-American Company, and then he was to cap his career as a traveller by his resounding voyage round the world in 1841—again in connection with the Russian-American Company. But spectacular as these journeys were, these were not the journeys which made Simpson a great Governor. That had been already achieved by the quartering of his domain in the rough voyages of his bachelor days; it was confirmed after his marriage by his frequent journeys to England rather than by further tours in North America.

As yet the journeys to England had not worked into a pattern, and most of the period 1830 to 1833 was spent at Red River in an atmosphere of dissension and growing discouragement. The late thaw of 1831 prevented Simpson from attending the Council of the Southern Department in June of that year—the first time he had ever missed an appointment for such a reason, as he sourly noted. His wife's health broke during her first winter, and though she was considered to be in no danger there was a possibility that she might be unable to master the climate, with the consequence that Simpson would withdraw from the country. Her first son, George Geddes Simpson, was born in January 1832 but died at Easter, and Simpson's own health and even his confidence began to fail. His religious observances became more regular, and he wrote to his old correspondent J. G. McTavish that 'I myself am become so melancholy and low spirited that I scarcely know what enjoyment is . . . I feel that my health and strength are falling off rapidly. I am most anxious to get away from this Country of which I am sick and tired but my means do not enable me to shake off the Harness'. This is the period at which he was faced with the task of moving McTavish from York to the lesser appointment at Moose, warning him of the

partiality and irregularity which had led to the move while at the same time he pensioned off McTavish's 'old concern' who happened to be a niece of Donald McKenzie, Governor of Assiniboia. Low in spirits though he was, Simpson accomplished all this and also preserved the intimate friendship of McTavish and his wife.

This was the time at which Simpson began to keep his famous 'Character Book'. Few came off with unqualified praise, not even Donald Ross, Chief Trader in charge of Norway House, who had gone on the 1828 journey to the Columbia with Simpson: 'A very steady regular well behaved man who understands the whole routine of the interior business better than any of his class from the circumstance of his having been my confidential Clerk or Secty. for Seven Years and a most confidential man I always found him. He writes a good hand, expresses himself tolerably well altho not correctly on paper and understands accounts. Manages Indians and Servants very well, and possesses all the System and regularity necessary for the charge of a Depot; but his constitution has been injured by too much confinement at the Desk; he is moreover rather hippish and fanciful in regard to ailments so that he is not qualified for severe duty. Bears an excellent private character is quite a man of his word, and qualified to become useful in the direction of business.' That was about as far as Simpson went in praising any of his men—and it was high praise indeed. McTavish was 'the most finished man of business we had in the Country, well Educated, respectably connected and more of the Man of the World in his conversation and address than any of his colleagues—a good hearted man and generous to extravagance'. But for the most part Simpson, writing for his own clarification, did not bother to conceal the defects by oblique reference, as he did for these close friends. Even James McMillan, his companion in 1824, of whom he held the highest opinion, was criticised because 'His plain blunt manner however cannot conceal a vast deal of little highland pride, and his prejudices are exceedingly strong'.

Generally the criticism was even more astringent, and reflects as much the growing captiousness of the Governor as the weaknesses of the men he described. Colin Robertson (not without cause) went down as a burden on the fur trade. John Stuart was 'lavish of his own means, extravagant and irregular in business, and his honesty is very questionable . . . his Day is gone by and he is now worse than useless'. Alexander McTavish (just appointed to Lake Nipigon, where he died during the winter, 1832-3) was 'A sly, sneaking, plausible fellow who lives habitually full of low cunning, suspicion

and intrigue; continually laying himself out to rouse suspicions and to create dissensions; indolent, inactive, unhealthy arising from his own indiscretions and very useless'. This was a man whom Simpson accepted as 'the bitterest Enemy I ever had in the Country', but to the others he showed the same cynical realism. Most to the point, perhaps, is his assessment of John McLoughlin, the strong man whom Simpson had chosen to mould the Columbia Department to his will. The two men later quarrelled bitterly, but in 1832 all was well though Simpson had not concluded his 1829 Report on the Columbia with his usual praise for the Gentleman in Charge. McLoughlin, nevertheless, went into the Character Book with almost hostile reality as 'Very zealous in the discharge of his public duties and a man of strict honour and integrity, but a great stickler for rights and privileges and sets himself up as a righter of Wrongs. Very anxious to obtain a lead among his Colleagues with whom he has not much influence owing to his ungovernable Violent temper and turbulent disposition, and would be a troublesome man to the Company if he had sufficient influence to form and tact to manage a party; in short would be a Radical in any Country under any Government and under any circumstances'.

It is impossible to read through Simpson's Character Book without being overwhelmed by the shrewd and caustic comment. This was a revelation of uncompromising knowledge and capacity. But there is an air of disillusionment about it all which accords well with Simpson's mood in 1832. This is a thing apart from the sensible advice he had given on the management of the Councils: 'Keep temper and do not allow yourself to be drawn into altercations with any of those who may be there; you can gain neither honour nor glory by quarrelling with them but can twist them round your finger by setting about it properly'. The cheerful and confident cynicism of early years had given place to something just as shrewd, but which was becoming mean and captious.

The Governor and Mrs. Simpson went out by way of New York to spend the winter of 1833-4 in England; Simpson's health as well as that of his wife made such a journey necessary but he recovered rapidly in England and early fears that he might have to retire gave way to hopes 'that we may be blessed once more with a sight of his honest face next spring'. But Mrs. Simpson had suffered greatly on the journey home; Simpson wondered if she would ever venture across the Atlantic again, and in 1834 he returned alone, began his travels forthwith, and got to Moose by the middle of May. He, and the whole of the Company's officers, were to miss the presence of

the gentle Frances for many years. But Simpson was restored to full vigour. There was no further talk of retirement. Yet though the Governor was back in control, and now firmly committed to his task, the control was noticeably more arbitrary than it had previously been. He was rather the isolated exponent of the wishes and interests of the London Committee than the champion of the fur traders.

The 'Little Emperor' had emerged, and with his autocracy there was blended the unfailing support of the Governor and Committee in London. This was shewn clearly when John McLean appealed against Simpson on the ground that Simpson alone had put him on one side when a majority of the Council had decided that he was due for a Chief Trader's post, and that he had been exiled to the unprofitable post of Chimo in Ungava after Simpson had promised him promotion to the command of Mackenzie River. The Committee stood firmly by Simpson though there was no doubt about the facts as stated by McLean. 'When a subordinate officer addresses his superior in command in insulting or discourteous terms, he shows that, however long he may have been in the service, he has an important point of duty still to learn.'

McLean declared that 'In no colony subject to the British Crown is there to be found an authority so despotic as is at this day exercised in the mercantile Colony of Rupert's Land; an authority combining the despotism of military rule with the strict surveillance and mean parsimony of the avaricious trader. From Labrador to Nootka Sound the unchecked, uncontrolled will of a single individual gives law to the land'. 'Clothed with a power so unlimited', wrote McLean, 'it is not to be wondered at that a man who rose from a humble situation should in the end forget what he was and play the tyrant'. The absolutism was based on the fact that the Governor had in 1833 begun a series of visits to London from which he returned with full information and authority. So the Councils became little more than a means of propagating decisions which had already been reached, and McLean even alleged that the Minutes were already drawn out before the Councils met! There was substance in the accusation, whether the incidents quoted were true or not.

The Governor had mastered his Councils. The Deed Poll remained as a method of distributing the share of the profits of the trade; but as a method of managing the trade it had been supplanted by George Simpson. 'The Governor, having taken up his residence for some years past in England, crosses the Atlantic once a year, and during his brief sojourn, Norway House forms his head-quarters.

Here it is that the sham Council is held, and everything connected with the business of the interior arranged.' John McLean cannot be upheld as a fair witness where Simpson was concerned, for he thought the Governor had tricked him. But this estimate of the way in which the business of the fur trade was conducted under Simpson is not far from the truth.

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CHAPTER XIX

ECONOMY AND RECUPERATION

Simpson can hardly be said to have 'taken up his residence in England', in McLean's phrase, although his wife remained there until 1845 and he journeyed regularly to London. Rather, he resided at Montreal, and as he settled down, from 1833 onwards, at the house which the Company purchased for him at Lachine on the St. Lawrence, he was removing himself from the bickerings of Red River and was, in a way, taking up a strategic position for the management of the fur trade. He was not yet at the height of his powers, for he was not appointed Governor-in-Chief of all the Company's territories until 1839. The title superseded the two separate titles of Governor of the Northern and of the Southern Department, and made little difference in practice. But it was a sign of the ever-increasing confidence in the man, and of recognition for what he had accomplished.

There remained, however, major issues still to be settled by the time that Simpson was firmly established in control, for the fur trade over which he ruled had to be brought into relations with American expansion across the continent, with Russian ambitions on the Pacific coast, with prairie settlement, and with the development of a North American system of transportation. None of these issues was settled by 1833. To that date the achievement consisted in reforming the abuses and inefficiencies of the trade as it had emerged from the coalition of the two companies. What remained to be done was to evolve a policy which would make such a reorganised trade profitable in the changing conditions of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Broadly speaking, the internal problems of the trade as it emerged from the coalition stemmed from the defects of the two companies—from the extravagance of the Northwesters and from the stolidity of the Hudson's Bay men. In addition, both companies had taken on more men than the trade needed, and both companies had encouraged the Indians to adopt the habits of a competitive trade—habits in which reckless hunting had exhausted the fur-bearing animals, and in which the Indians were accustomed to high prices, generous credits and complaisant treatment.

In his early days Simpson had shown all the enthusiasm of the

novice and had run into serious errors because he was over-sanguine. The Bow River Expedition and the Nelson-Burntwood route to Athabaska are glaring examples of this, and both show his ability to withdraw from an untenable position. The old tradition of the Company, derived from 'Mr. Fidler whose experience is undoubted' was that Bow River, the South Branch of the Saskatchewan, was an area from which little could be expected in the way of furs and much in the way of trouble with the Piegans and other Plains Indians, who were largely independent of the Company for supplies and food, and who had American trappers to whom they could turn. But the need to find occupation for redundant servants combined with the need to rest and recuperate the North Branch of the Saskatchewan, with urgings from the Governor and Committee, and with Simpson's ability to make such urgings acceptable to his Council. The Bow River Expedition of 1822 was launched under Donald McKenzie and John Rowand, and the possibility that the South Branch would prove so lucrative as to make it possible to close down the North Branch for a period of recuperation was so vivid that Simpson's 1822-3 journey had this as one of its objects. The Council left the decision to Simpson, and he proposed to make his mind up on the spot, in the course of his journey. But reports from McKenzie, Rowand, and others who had gone to Bow River, were such as to damp even the enthusiasm of Simpson in 1823. The returns in furs from the South Branch were miserable, the remains of goods un-traded were considerable, great credit was due to Donald McKenzie; but the expedition must be accounted a failure. Simpson, sadly reflecting that this showed how little trust could be placed on Indian report, decided to abandon the Bow River project and accepted the conclusion that the North Branch of the Saskatchewan could not be abandoned (with the double object of bringing the Indians to heel and of recruiting the fur-bearing animals) until Red River colony had so developed that it could supply the bulk of the provisions required for the trade.

Simpson's abandonment of his enthusiasm for the Nelson-Burntwood route to Athabaska after he had obtained favourable reports on it, and had even traversed it himself and written in glowing terms of its merits, has already been noted. He placed his theories against the lessons of experience, but he knew both the folly of persisting in the face of facts and the simplest ways of dropping theories when they proved impracticable. The Burntwood and Nelson River route sinks out of sight with no further comment after 1824.

For the most part, however, Simpson's first phase entailed less imaginative approaches, but more of persistence and authority than was shown in these two great projects in which he changed his mind. Changes in the habits of both the Indians and of the traders were needed, but could only be achieved by steady pressure. The problem of stimulating traders to an active policy without encouraging them to trade every skin which the Indians produced, regardless of its quality, had long harassed the Company. But the traditions of competitive trading gave great advantages to the Indians and from the start they had shown that they suspected the coalition. Yet it was clear that prosperity, and even the survival of the fur trade, would depend upon the extent to which the Indians could be prevented from killing summer beaver. It was valueless, and summer hunting prevented beaver from reproducing.

As early as 1822 the Committee had advised that the Council should discourage Indians from hunting beaver and valuable fur animals in summer and when out of season, and added that cub beaver should not be killed and that the use of beaver traps should be prevented. Traps had proved so much more effective than previous methods that they were reckoned a definite factor in reducing the beaver population, especially as the Iroquois spread westwards in the wake of the fur-traders and as the Indians discovered that the castoreum which they had hitherto despised was so potent a bait that the beaver flocked into the traps. Simpson reported, in due course, that the Council had discouraged the Indians, according to this advice, and had warned that skins out of season would not be taken. It would be a labour of time to wean the Indians from their habits of dissipation, and it would always be difficult to prevent the killing of cub beaver since the Indians relished their flesh as a delicacy; but the use of beaver traps should have been prohibited long ago and none would in future be issued except for new districts and frontier establishments, where opposition was to be expected. The Committee repeated their warning in 1823, adding that 'considerable districts should be left unhunted for three or four years', and Simpson reported as he returned from his 1822-3 journey that exhausted districts were being recruited and that the Indians had been discouraged from killing young beaver—a move which was supported by the Council of 1824.

His journey to the Columbia in 1824 convinced Simpson that drastic measures were required. By the time he had reached Frog Portage he was appalled at the state to which years of close hunting had brought the once-prosperous areas through which he passed. In

the whole of Nelson River District he did not see a solitary vestige of beaver and he could see no remedy save to forbid beaver-hunting there entirely for the next five years. The veto would not be popular either with traders or with Indians, but Simpson was sanguine enough to think that Indians could be diverted to living on 'reindeer' and to hunting martens and muskrats. He modified his views to the extent of getting the Council of 1825 to order that the hunting of beaver in English River District be discouraged, and followed this up by a general rule discouraging the taking of summer beaver. As experience grew, the plan for discouragement took more helpful shape with emphasis on small furs, and this approach to the problem was embodied in Standing Rules and Regulations at the Council of 1828. The Committee, in the meantime, had advised stronger action, suggesting in 1826 that each district should be allotted a maximum quota of beaver; Simpson and the Council named a maximum 'quantum' of beaver, based upon the average returns for the past three years, for each district. The cuts were savage; English River, Cumberland, Norway House, Island Lake, Severn, Nelson River, Fort Assiniboine, Lesser Slave Lake, Churchill and York Fort were limited to the production of half their annual average; Winnipeg District was limited to two-thirds, Swan River and Upper Red River to three-quarters, and Athabaska and Saskatchewan to four-fifths of their averages.

Since the returns of 1826 were thus based on an average for the three previous years the quotas assessed for the years which followed, similarly based upon current returns regardless of the fact that such returns were controlled, followed slavishly and inflexibly, at precisely the same figure year after year. In more than usually sanguine mood Simpson explained to the Committee that York District was capable of producing furs to meet the demands of the market at a year's notice. There was, he said, plenty of beaver, fox and marten in the district and the gentleman in charge (his close friend McTavish) could double the returns at will by stirring up the idle Indians, who normally gave up hunting and earned quite respectable livings as labourers on the transport-route between York and Norway House. But though Simpson thus made a virtue of the small returns from York—which was reduced to a quota of under two hundred beaver in 1826 and to a share with Churchill in a quota of three hundred in subsequent years—the quota system brought all the inelasticity which monopoly made possible.

In so far as the quotas proved workable, they imposed rigid restrictions on output. They had the justifiable aim of allowing a

recovery of the fur-bearing animals, but the results of the system, though difficult to ascertain, were certainly not uniformly beneficial. The returns of Severn, for example, showed steady improvement from 1821 to 1825; but much of the increase in profits was due to a drastic reduction in costs, the returns were mostly in fox and marten, and there was no vestige of beaver within a hundred miles of the post although the district had never been affected by opposition. The poverty of the country had increased still further by 1826, but any proposal to give the district a chance of recruitment by abandoning Severn itself and trading through a series of small posts supplied by inland transportation was, on reflection, out of the question for geographical reasons. In English River Simpson did indeed find it possible to apply the system; but with little effect. There in 1824 he began a policy of recruitment, closing old posts and opening new ones; but when the post at Caribou Lake was started again after a three years' lapse, in which the beaver should have recovered, there was no increase in the furs, and the real solution to the problem of this exhausted district proved to be the simple economic answer of reducing the posts to two, at Ile-à-la-Crosse and Lac la Ronge, which was all that the trade could afford. Complete abandonment of the district, or a veto on the sale of fire-arms, would have caused severe privations to the Indians; but a low price for summer beaver, a veto on the supply of traps, and a veto on the trading of spirits for furs, 'the usual stimulant to exertion', should all have combined with the changes in the posts to justify Simpson in his policy. Yet by 1832 he was confessing that the policy of recruitment had produced no effect in English River, merely inconvenience; the one solid achievement had been to cut the number of the posts.

Elsewhere the same mixed and inconclusive results followed the policy of recuperation. In Island Lake District Simpson reported a partial recovery of the fur-bearing animals by 1831, 'which shows if further proof were necessary, that nothing is required to bring the Country into its former rich state but time to recruit'. But he had to add that one result of the system was that instead of a given area of country being considered as traditionally the hunting country of one particular band of Indians the whole district had come to be considered as common ground for all the Indians of the vicinity. They moved freely into the lands which the Company was for the moment considering as well-stocked, and 'over-wrought' that district fearfully. Simpson was aware that the solvent to the problem lay in turning the Indians to more intense hunting of small furs, especially

of martens, and that even so one result of the changes in the posts—the abandonment of Merry's House and the establishment of Windy Lake, for example—was that the Indians ceased to be dependent on hunting and went off to spend their winters idly gaining the minimum subsistence at a fishery.

The same defects were met in Athabaska, where the country was exhausted of valuable furs by 1825. There Simpson could see no remedy save to reduce establishments and costs, and to push large bands of Chipewyans eastwards to get subsistence by hunting 'rein deer'. The problem in Athabaska was closely related to that in Peace River. There the decision to close St. John's in favour of a post at Rocky Mountain Portage, and the cutting down of the trade in spirituous liquors, led the Beaver Indians in November 1823 to murder trader Guy Hughes while he was alone at his post at St. John's, and then to murder four of his men as they were returning from Fort Dunvegan. A further murder was committed at Dunvegan in 1824, and Simpson and the Northern Council decided to abandon Peace River altogether and to close both Dunvegan and Rocky Mountain Portage. The respite from hunting would give the country a chance to recover and would also effectually punish the Indians. But such discipline was not to the taste of the Beaver Indians. Their own notions of the appropriate punishment were shown when they themselves executed one of the murderers, and while they resented the control of their trade they also regarded the lack of any kind of punitive raid as a sort of tolerant forbearance which encouraged them in their outrageous behaviour. So when their own posts were closed they moved down to Lower Peace River, where Fort Vermilion was kept well supplied, and into Athabaska where they quarrelled with the Chipewyans and upset the trade.

The Beaver Indians were not the only migrants to offset a policy of rest and recuperation in Athabaska: freemen, who had often intermarried with Indians and so, perhaps, had some claim to hunting rights, roamed at random both in Athabaska and Peace River, and bands of new-comers from the more distant Chipewyan lands came to settle near Athabaska Lake, where the post was maintained and where the fishery promised a livelihood. The freemen were ordered to be removed, by compulsion if necessary, to Canada or Red River, and the Company's servants must use their influence to persuade the Chipewyans to return to the Barren Lands and live off deer by hunting with bows and arrows. It was not a very encouraging prospect, but by 1826 Simpson was showering praise upon James

Keith, who had shown a profit of £13,000 on the year's trade in Athabaska and who had reconciled the Indians to the new system. By 1832 he was writing that Peace River, though formerly impoverished, had become the richest part of Athabaska. The freemen had been 'persuaded to withdraw of their own accord' to Lesser Slave Lake, and the fur-bearing animals had recovered.

The policy of rest and recuperation was possible only within the absolute control of trade which the Charter, and the Licence of Exclusive Trade of 1821, gave to the Company. There was much to be said in favour of such a policy, for only by enforcing some such restraint could the fur trade, and the livelihood of the Indians from fur-hunting, be maintained. But even within the Company's undisputed territories the policy could easily be upset by the nomadism, the turbulence, or the sheer indifference of the Indians. This Simpson accepted, with the corollary that reductions in establishments put the posts at the mercy of the Indians. His remedy lay in competent traders: 'In nine cases out of ten where serious differences arise between the natives and the people of the Establishments I am of opinion that the cause may be traced to ourselves'.

Though it might, by shrewd management, thus be possible to control and regulate the trade to some extent within the Company's territories, where competition had to be met the system of rest and recuperation was quite inapplicable. This was a point upon which Simpson was firmly settled in his opinion by 1830, and he was plainly in the right. While approving of the need to nurse the country back to productivity, he pointed out that such a policy was possible in the 'thick-wood Districts of the Hon'ble Company's Territories', but in the Plains which were as much over-run by Indians from the Missouri as by those from British territory, and on the west of the mountains, where American opposition was strong, conservation was impossible and every encouragement must be given to 'hunt the Country close'. This applied to Rupert River and rivalry from the traders of Canada, including the lessees of the King's Posts, as well as to American rivals. Nursing the country would always be a bad policy where the trade was challenged 'as an exhausted country I conceive to be the best protection we can have from opposition'.

Nursing the country was therefore a policy applied by Simpson with a sense of reality which enabled him to force his Councils to realise the advantages, to force the Committee to realise the limitations, and to force the Indians and the traders to face the practical implications. The result, as he would have expected, was by no

means the uniform success which some might have hoped. Nothing could prevent the Indians from killing beaver for food and clothing, and when the Company refused to trade beaver the Indians took to wearing the skins themselves. But much had been accomplished. The bayside districts, screened from opposition, had reasonably recovered by 1832, and this was much to set against the close hunting and progressive impoverishment of the frontier districts. But the policy had certainly not proved to be the simple and easily-applied remedy which it was expected to be. It could only be applied within the limitations imposed by opposition and by Indian character and habit, and it says much for Simpson's control of the situation that he so far reconciled the theory to the facts.

A similar reconciliation of theory to fact was required when the Committee's reiterated orders to cease the trade in spirituous liquors had to be brought into relation to the habits of the fur trade. Excessive use of spirits, like improvident killing of beaver, had been a marked feature of the opposition between the companies. The Company had indeed always tried to check the importation and consumption of spirits, but that was as much because discipline suffered and private trade flourished when brandy ran free as for any moral reason. Whatever the moral implications, the practical lessons of the trade had been those driven home by Hearne and by Graham, and indeed by generations of traders. Nothing was to be got from the inland Indians without brandy, certainly not provisions; the Indians were utterly addicted to spirits, and the success of the Northwesters had been largely due to their generous supplies. Though in the early days of British settlement in North America it had been said that the Dutch made a certain liquor, called rum, which was not as good as brandy, yet rum in time took its place with brandy in the trade, as did 'English' or 'Corn Brandy', and so gave an equivalent to the advantage which brandy gave to the French. Rising prices added to the desire to cut the trade—brandy cost four times as much after the outbreak of the French Revolution as before. But competition, and dependence upon the Indians, made effective action impossible; in the last stages of the struggle both companies were concentrating on means to double-distil the spirits so as to cheapen costs of transportation—an early example of the use of the process of dehydration! Whatever the *Saints in Parliament* might urge, the Northwesters were convinced they could not manage their trade on less than five thousand gallons of spirits a year (they actually used ten thousand), and the Hudson's Bay men were equally convinced that 'Spiritous Liquors are the Chief

Articles of the Canadian Trade', however much they might regret that spirits ever found access to the Indians.

So, when in 1820 the Committee urged Governor William Williams to cut the use of spirits and to encourage the use of sugar instead, that uncompromising seaman replied that, as far as the Indians were concerned 'We very much fear the Hon'ble Committee are too sanguine in their anticipation of a sudden reduction'. It even seemed proper and necessary to allow spirits to the Indians, as a reward and relaxation after the hardships of their winter existence. Simpson too had his misgivings; supplying the men with all the spirits they wanted was the best way of getting them to spend their wages at the Company's store, and he was convinced that spirits would remain necessary as long as the fur trade remained dependent on the Indians for provisions. Such dependence gave the Indians the whip-hand and could only be safely countered by exploiting their craving. Yet Williams promised that every step should be taken to enforce the Company's wishes, and Simpson and his Council ordered that presents of spirits should be cut by half and that no more should be traded for furs.

The cutting down of spirits was entirely in conformity with the policy advocated by the Colonial Office, and a clause laying such a duty upon the Company had been part of the Licence for Exclusive Trade in 1821, since debauching of the Indians had been put forward as inevitable under competition, and its avoidance as a strong argument for monopoly. So Bathurst approved entirely of the Company's policy, and the Councils raised the price of spirits to their own servants, passed resolutions approving the gradual discontinuance of spirituous liquors by Indians and then, more forcefully from 1826 onwards, forbidding the taking of any spirits into Athabaska, English River or Mackenzie River. The quantity of spirits taken into the country had already been cut to less than one-twelfth part of that which the two companies had taken in during the opposition, and did not amount to more than three gallons a year for each European servant.

Simpson was emphatic that the use of spirits ranked alongside 'improper familiarity' with Indian women as a cause of serious differences with the Indians, and already by 1825 he noted the end of the scenes of debauchery which had formerly marked trade-time at the posts. 'We are now thank God merely distressed by the recollection of such scenes, as from one end of the country there is not a single skin purchased by liquor.' He was not overlooking the custom of making a moderate present of spirits when the Indians brought

in their fall and spring hunts, but he was preparing in his mind the plan to use the disturbances in Peace River as an excuse to prevent the use of spirits altogether, even to the Company's servants. So in 1826 came the order that no liquors of any description should be taken to any post north of Cumberland 'as if the Servants or even the Gentlemen were allowed to indulge in either Spirits or Wines while the Indians are deprived thereof it would excite dissatisfaction'. The hardship would call for some recompense in tobacco and sugar, but the advantages would be worth-while.

Simpson, however, was writing only of the northern districts, screened from opposition and barren of provisions save fish. He well knew that in the Southern Department, on the frontier of opposition, spirits remained an important article of trade, and John McLean's *Notes* on his service at Lake of Two Mountains, the Chats Portage and elsewhere, make it clear that he was familiar with all the scenes of debauchery, brutality and danger, which went with the 'keg of nectar' given as a *regale* and with the bartering of furs for spirits, and even the granting of credit in rum. 'Rum and brandy flowed in streams.' Here the opposition was from Canadian petty traders and from 'Yankee grog-shops', and there could be no respite. The American Fur Company, led by J. J. Astor, in 1830 proposed that both companies should relinquish the use of spirits, but when Simpson met Astor in New York both men agreed that it was impossible to abandon spirits. Simpson reported that Astor had hoped to throw the English off their guard and to steal a march on them. But while trade on the frontier was open to every desperate adventurer the two great traders agreed that each company must follow its own practices and that (to use Astor's phrase) if they abandoned the use of spirits the Hudson's Bay Company would hold the head of the cow, the American Fur Company would hold its tail, and the petty traders would come in the middle and enjoy the milk.

On the Pacific Coast, too, the active opposition of American and Russian traders meant that the Company could not afford to abandon spirits. But both Simpson and McLoughlin were anxious to mitigate the evil where possible, and to prevent it in new areas. Captain Hanwell, of the Brig *William and Ann*, was roundly reprovved at the end of his coasting voyage of 1825; although he had met American opposition he was told 'It is unfortunate the Captain Sells liquor to the Indians—It spoils them—we Sell No liquor to them on any account, Selling liquor to Indians is prohibited by a positive order of the Committee'. Only when the American traders

had rejected a proposal that both they and the Company should discountenance the trade in arms and in spirits did Ogden at Stikine begin to trade spirits in 1832, while Simpson told the Committee that 'Without these articles we can have no chance of success, we must therefore either abandon the contest altogether, or follow the example of our opponents by the unlimited sale of them to the natives'.

In this Simpson was echoing McLoughlin's considered opinion that the Company must either follow the American practice or retire from the coast, but that an arrangement to suppress the trade in spirits would have his strong support 'as Besides the Actual Injury Liquor does them I will say as far as my Experience goes that it is injurious to the Regular trader and Only Advantageous to an Opposition'. McLoughlin in 1840 forbade the use of spirits by the Snake Country Expedition while at the same time he proposed to the Russians at Sitka an abandonment of the practice. The offer was rejected but the Committee promised its support for such moves. As the American ships on the north-west coast were driven out of business or bought by McLoughlin, the use of spirits was steadily discontinued except in the immediate vicinity of the Russian posts, and in 1841, after he and the Russian Governor Etholine had been witnesses at Sitka to some 'horrible scenes of bloodshed arising from drunkenness', Simpson put in hand an agreement (signed in 1842) that no spirituous liquors should be issued to the Indians on the coast after 1843. To follow this up, Simpson ordered that no spirits should be sold or given in drams to any of the Company's officers or servants at any establishment on the coast; the stock on hand was to be laid up and 'held sacred', and Simpson over-ruled in advance any plea that the moist climate of the coast might make a moderate use of spirits necessary. McLoughlin, however, maintained that the 'usual gratuity' of a pint of rum on engaging, a pint at New Year's day, a pint when they left for winter quarters, a pint when they returned and 'now and then a glass', were old-established indulgences. The Russians also saw no reason why they should go short merely because they had agreed to trade no spirits to Indians. Being 'in very much want now of gin', they ordered consignments from the Sandwich Islands through the Hudson's Bay Company. But the Committee stood behind the policy and the Russian agreement, and from 1844 onwards, as the American settlers in Oregon began to govern themselves, they also fell into a similar policy. Their first legislature made laws to regulate land claims and to prohibit the introduction and manufacture of spirits among themselves.

This urge to carry into a zone of settlement and colonisation a

veto derived from the nature of the fur trade and the character of the Indians was something more than the Committee or the Council thought necessary. For Simpson there were clear distinctions between the circumstances of a white settlement, of a post engaged in competitive trade, a post dependent on Indian hunts for provisions, and a post enjoying monopoly or an agreement with its rivals; and only where spirits could be denied to the Indians without loss of trade did he think such an action justifiable. For white settlers in the Red River Colony he advocated in 1831 that a distillery at Norway House would afford a market for the settlers' barley, would permit the development of a fine farm for cattle and hogs, fed on the mash, and would save the freight on four thousand gallons of rum a year for the use of the Northern Department. He quite saw the dangers, but his main object was at this time to give economic stability to the settlers by providing a market for them. The Committee were equally hard-headed; leaving ideals on one side, they forbade the proposal because the low price of rum in England made it not worth-while. The Company's approach to the question of a distillery at the colony remained so marked by realism. In 1843 Duncan Finlayson reported the Council of Assiniboia in favour of a still; he merely hoped that some respectable person would undertake the business, otherwise the settlers would undertake it themselves. When in 1843 the Council of Assiniboia decided to allow a still in the settlement Simpson wished to keep the Company out of the business and to let the concession to a body of respectable settlers. But when the respectable settlers were not forthcoming he allowed the Company to be involved, moved by the needs of the fur trade and by the dangers of illicit distilleries.

The policy of abandoning the trade in spirits, therefore, was always applied by Simpson and his Councils with a shrewd appraisal of its effects on the fur trade. On the whole they would prohibit spirits to Indians whenever possible, and even to their own men where that seemed a necessary part of the veto to Indians. But where Indians were not concerned, where Indians held the whip-hand by their control of the provision trade, or where Indians could go elsewhere for their drink if the Company denied them, the policy was left as an aspiration rather than as a reality. At Cumberland, for example, spirits were kept for *regales* but not for trade; the habit caused much jealousy in neighbouring districts and would have been discontinued but for fear of the furs going to the Americans; for it was only a 'pleasant summer journey from Cumberland to the Americans at Pembina and near Red River'.

While the reorganisation of the trade by a policy of rest and recuperation, and by a policy of weaning the Indians from spirits, had in it elements of idealism, much was based upon hard-headed analysis. Economy was the great cry. Top-heavy establishments, recruited during the rivalry, must be cut to the needs of a controlled trade; posts must be reduced and re-sited, and supplies, provisions and luxuries must be cut. Here the sardonic uncompromising side of Simpson's 'counting-house' approach to the fur trade came to the front, and was of the greatest value. These were all matters in which individuals must be brought to heel, whether the individuals were Chief Factors of long experience and considerable stature, or whether they were broken-down old Canadian *voyageurs* with swarms of dusky children. For the most part Simpson's discipline lay in the enactment and enforcement of obviously sane rules; but on occasions it took the form of personal chastisement. He was a tough, solid little man, 'height two diameters', capable of great physical endurance; and his temper matched his strength, so that his career was strewn with anecdotes of chastisement which he had personally inflicted. Even McLoughlin, bitterly noting that 'Sir George Simpson is become all at once very sensitive about striking the men', was forced to add that, when he had himself seen the Governor knock a man down, 'I may say in truth, I never saw a man get a neater blow'. In fairness he concluded that the blow was well-deserved; the man was Simpson's personal servant Tom Taylor, who had brought a 'lewd woman' into the post.

But although the Governor on occasions appealed to force, the discipline and economy of his régime stand out clearly in the Minutes of his Councils and in his Reports to his Committees. To his officers he was adamant, even when they were his close personal friends. J. G. McTavish for example, despite the reforms he had wrought at York, his friendship with Simpson and the affection of their two wives, was removed from York to Moose with the warning that 'in the bustle Toil and hurry of Business irregularities may have crept in, likewise for the sake of peace and quietness is possible in some instances'.

In general terms Simpson and his Council resolved that every Chief Factor and Chief Trader must be fit and active, capable of performing his work; and in 1826 they fell in with a suggestion from the Committee that the Deed Poll should allow more easy retirement. Instead of a half-share of the profits of trade for six years after retirement, they were to be allowed a full share for 1827, three-quarters of a share for three years, and a half-share for the remaining

three years. When such encouragement produced no results, Simpson saw no other remedy but to send the 'infirm old Gentlemen' to arduous posts far from the centre of the trade. He had already done something on these lines when he removed the 'useless drone' Colin Robertson from the comparative comfort of Norway House to Churchill in 1824. Perhaps the best-known example of his shifting of subordinates in this fashion was the way in which he took Alexander Ross from command of the Snake Country Expedition and made of him a schoolmaster at Red River. He found Ross a self-sufficient empty-headed man, whose reports were full of 'marvellous nonsense', but he concealed this opinion from the future author, so that not only did Ross accept the appointment as schoolmaster but he even dedicated his *Fur Hunters of the Far West* to the Governor and gave the Company a very fair meed of praise in his *First Settlers on the Columbia River* and in *The Red River Settlement*.

Habits died hard however, and in 1825 the Council decided that 'Much irregularity inconvenience and loss having been experienced from a general inattention to neglect of and deviation from the minutes of Council on the part of Commissioned Gentlemen, instances whereof are too numerous and generally admitted to require examples', fines and damages should in future be inflicted, and the practice of travelling at ease in a light canoe (a heritage from the North West tradition) was forbidden. The voyages of the Governor enabled him to check a vast number of malpractices and little disreputable proceedings, and only major instances were brought before the Council or came to the notice of the Committee.

Reductions in numbers of men were complicated by questions of wages and of equipment. The Committee's instructions to reduce all wages to the same scale proved impossible. But a move was immediately made to take those with large families to Red River, 'or any other place they may choose to retire to' as their contracts expired. Simpson hoped to lop a quarter off the wages bill of £60,000 in his first year as Governor of the Northern Department, but in this he was not quite in agreement with the Committee, who insisted that high nominal wages, to be spent at the Company's stores on goods at equally high prices, were a vicious and extravagant system. This was the Canadian system, on which many men served. The Committee wanted 'European terms' in which low wages went with low prices at the Company's shop. In 1822 the scale of salaries was overhauled and reduced considerably—but the Council ventured the opinion that the Committee were too optimistic. Since

Canadians had not yet mastered the art of managing boats, English servants had to be kept at rates higher than the Committee proposed, and since an attempt to reduce the Canadians to the Committee's terms seemed likely to produce a mutiny, that also was abandoned. It also proved impossible to end the system of giving equipments to the Canadians.

While they were forced to give high wages the Council insisted that prices of goods must also remain high. Whereas the Committee suggested an advance on prime cost of 50 per cent. for clerks and servants, the Council maintained a price of 75 per cent. advance on prime cost for European servants, and of 300 per cent. on prime cost for Canadians. With a small addition for 'charges' they accepted the suggestion of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. advance on prime costs for officers, and of a 50 per cent. advance for clerks on European terms. Wages were subsequently modified according to districts and the hardships involved, and steady pressure was exerted to get the men on to 'European terms', stated in sterling at from £27 to £20 for a bowsman and from £22 to £17 for a *milieu*, in which equipments were not given and goods were sold at less advances. With the Committee even willing to remit debts to Canadians who would come on to European terms, to save complicated accountancy and useless jealousy, the problem began to yield to treatment as contracts expired and came up for renewal. By 1825 Simpson was reporting that even the Canadians were convinced of the value of low wages as long as they were accompanied by low prices. His officers were able to recruit all the men they needed, and there never was a better or more tractable set of men in the Indian country. During the year 1825-6 the wages bill for the Northern Department was cut by from four to five thousand pounds and Simpson thought there was little more to be economised in that direction.

But Simpson was not quite content. The quality of the Orkney-men had been falling off. At one time Simpson claimed that not one in twelve was fit for duty, at another that every second or third man was useless. Certainly some strange and ill-chosen creatures arrived at York; five of them were rejected out of hand by the surgeon in 1825 and had to be shipped straight home, and Simpson clamoured for a new agent at Stromness (where George Geddes had gone bankrupt in 1820). His remedy was to start recruiting half-breeds from Red River. They were indeed indolent, and able to desert and find their way home. But they were cheap and they had great natural aptitudes. The Home Guard Indians of York, Moose, and of the posts on the main transport routes, too, had many of them

abandoned the hunt completely and lived by working the brigades of boats from the coast to the depots.

Helpful though it undoubtedly was to simplify wages to a sterling standard and to cut down luxuries and perquisites, the main economy came through discharging or pensioning the redundant. At the time of the coalition the Hudson's Bay Company employed 420 Europeans and 350 Canadians in the Northern Department alone, and Simpson and the Council set to work to cut these numbers. With a tenth of Selkirk's lands at Red River to dispose of, the Committee encouraged grants of hundred-acre lots to men retired from the trade. Under Halkett's influence the council resolved to give plots of twenty to thirty acres, and to distribute food, ammunition and tools, as a proper charge against the fur trade, to men with families. The Orkneymen, many of them with some savings, proved a welcome and stabilising element in the colony, but the Company on the whole preferred to direct towards the colony the Canadians and half-breeds who were left over from the North West Company or from Robertson's Montreal recruitment for Athabaska. Though freemen maintained their liberty and continued to haunt the posts of the north and west, yet after a shaky start in 1821 and 1822, the movement gathered way in 1823 when more than two hundred employees moved to the colony. The effects on the colony of such an immigration, of men and women used to the hardships of life in the north-west but unused to the heavy labour of agriculture, are real but difficult to assess; the effects on the fur trade were clearly visible in the balance-sheets of the separate districts and of the concern as a whole.

The Chief Factors and Chief Traders had not expected any profits until the prodigious expenses had been cut back; and they were not disappointed with the trade of those years. It was as well, however, that the Deed Poll had only provided that losses on the year's trade should be set off against future profits and should not be met by demands upon the holders of the shares of trade, for in 1821 the loss amounted to £30,000, which involved each share of trade in a debit balance of £196 7s. 2d. Next year the profit was £203 8s. 9d. a share, and the traders gained steadily from the improvements until the profit on each share rose to £550 in 1827. The dividends paid to the proprietors had also crept up, from the four per cent. paid up to 1824, to ten per cent. on an increased capital (£400,000) and to twenty per cent. from 1828 to 1832; they fluctuated from year to year, but dividends never fell below ten per cent. again during the long reign of George Simpson. Not until the re-organisation of 1864 brought the capital of the Company to £2,000,000 did the

factors draw less than £500 a year or the proprietors less than ten per cent. from the profits of the re-organised trade.

The Council had announced in 1823 that they would not be content until the profits of the Northern Department alone exceeded £100,000 a year, but from 1823 onwards they were prosperous men, and on the whole contented. Even the extravagant Colin Robertson, his head crammed with ridiculous notions for setting his family up in the world, with family chaplains, resident governesses and the like, sick himself and with an ailing wife and a lunatic niece to burden him, left an estate of five or six thousand pounds of which about three thousand pounds remained after his debts had been paid off. Others, more provident, found that despite fears that 'the old H.B. gold dust is gone for ever', that 'our Dividends will never again return to what they were a few years ago', prospered, educated their families, and left considerable sums behind them. Often they left Simpson or the Committee to explain and defend the complicated and contradictory wills in which they bequeathed their shares of the profits to their Indian or white children, or to both. Often Simpson invested such funds, and he once boasted that he had not made a loss on such an investment in sixteen years.

Such prosperity depended on constant and unrelaxing vigilance in a world in which the beaver hat was being steadily superseded by the silk 'topper'; and the precariousness of their profits was always in danger of bringing the factors to trade all the beaver they could get. 'Strike off the cursed *cruel* Taboo that is on the Beaver and Mackenzies River will yet do something' wrote the experienced 'pack-maker' John Lee Lewes in 1843, and it required considerable management to keep the traders content with their emoluments and prospects. This was the more difficult because discipline and fines necessarily fell unevenly. When the York Fort Indians, for example, were allowed to kill six beaver apiece in 1842, the relaxation brought much grumbling from Churchill and Athabaska. Simpson, moreover, was growing captious and irresponsible, and though he continued to travel his domain, and to travel hard (even with a plunge in the river each morning!) his sight was dim and his judgment chancey. By 1851 it was current gossip that he had suffered two apoplectic seizures and that he might die at any moment. His own young cousin, Thomas Simpson, a graduate of Aberdeen whom the Governor had recruited into the service in 1829, early noted his tendency to over-drive willing servants, and the petty meanness of which he was capable; and as Simpson grew older and more remote his defects became more obvious and more open to criticism.

The changes wrought by Simpson were, moreover, utterly destructive of the old system into which the fur trade had grown. While the high estate of the officers was maintained, and the Chief Factor, surrounded with a ceremonial dignity, became 'lord paramount' in his district, the districts themselves suffered a complete change. This was most noticeable in the old districts by the Bay, on which the Company's trade had for so many years been based. Churchill in particular was diminished in the exchanges. The post which Auld had upheld in 1811 as worth more than all the territories to the south had been burned down by the settlers who had been forced to winter there in 1813-14, and its returns had steadily declined. In 1824 Churchill was deemed a suitable sinecure for Colin Robertson because no other post required less effort, and it then 'dwindled away to the rank of a petty Outpost of York Factory with no other Establishment than a Junior Clerk and Four men'. York itself had also been severely trimmed. The system of rest and recuperation was early brought to a fine point and the post was reduced to a depot at which the master-accounts for the Northern Department were kept by the competent Robert Miles, the indents for goods were checked and scrutinised, and the outfits and brigades for the interior were prepared by John George McTavish, then by Alexander Christie, and from 1833 onwards by James Hargrave.

But York and Churchill between them produced only three hundred beaver a year. The great shortage of timber in the vicinity had always made buildings difficult to maintain, and the climate had always been 'nine months of winter varied by three of rain and mosquitoes'. Scurvy plagued the staff despite plentiful game on the Point of Marsh between the Hayes and the Nelson River, and despite the care of the surgeons.

The decline in the trading importance of York was not due to sanitary difficulties, nor to lack of wood; indeed the Great House was rebuilt and its trade had not been affected by the defects that it was 'Proverbially the most flimsy and ill-contrived building in the country', badly planned and worse constructed, notable for its dirt and disorganisation, and a disgrace to the Company. Even as rebuilt by McTavish the post was still unsatisfactory, and Christie began a further rebuilding in 1831. But whatever its structural defects York would have remained as important as of old in the trade if the system of the Northern Department had not been changed. Simpson had advocated in 1822 that York should be the depot for the Athabaska, Mackenzie River and Peace River brigades. But when his own journey by the Nelson River and Burntwood route had

convinced him that boats could not satisfactorily be used on the Nelson (so that the Saskatchewan route would have to be used, with its consequent delays) he and the Council decided that Norway House must be the depot for those districts. So York became only the primary depot, sending the outfits up to Norway in the course of the winter, and the brigades from those districts never came down as far as York.

Though its active trade thus dwindled, York remained the great depot and accounting centre. There, in effect, the great geographical asset of the Company still carried weight, for York remained the focal point of the maritime approach to Rupert's Land, and in so far as the coalition of the two companies marked a re-routing of the fur trade away from the St. Lawrence and towards Hudson Bay, York Fort played its part in that development.

Norway House, however, had no such tradition of greatness as York, and no such essential position in the trade. Consequently its rise and fall in importance was more meteoric. After a brief period of fuss and bustle under Colin Robertson, the new district came under Simpson's close scrutiny. He decided that it did not produce enough trade to warrant the appointment of a Chief Factor but should be reduced to a petty trade post manned by a clerk and two men. As a depot also it was a source of delay and inconvenience and its importance can be gauged from the fact that when it was destroyed by fire in 1824 it made very little difference to the trade. The real loss was negligible; most of the Company's property destroyed had been lying on hand for several years and the most serious inconvenience was due to many commissioned officers using it as a depository for their best wardrobes, which were all burned to the value of several thousand pounds.

When a new Norway House was built at the mouth of Jack River, Simpson decided that it should be no more than a stores depot from 1826 on, to receive the outfits from York during winter and then to hand them on to the brigades. The boat system had been given a fair trial, and the conclusion was that the season of open water would never allow boats to make the complete voyage from Athabaska to York and back in one season; owing to late arrival of supplies the Indians would be unable to get out to their hunting-grounds. In 1825 part of the outfit for Athabaska had gone from York in canoes, part had gone in from Split Lake (acting as an emergency depot) in canoes, and Simpson decided to use Norway House for the whole supply since Split Lake was difficult of access from York and the food supply there was uncertain. He concluded

that there were great advantages in stripping Norway House of its trappings and that 'Instead of being a sink of expense and a continual source of trouble and irregularity' it should clear its expenses and be an accommodation to the interior generally. Limited thus, Norway House became a useful, even a necessary, establishment although the actual trade returns were negligible. In seasons of low water, when passage to the interior was difficult, it became particularly useful, and when Simpson was more busy than usual (in most years from 1833 onwards) it became the rendezvous where he met his officers in Council.

Of all the changes which he introduced among the old establishments the greatest, Simpson alleged, was that made in Saskatchewan. There the establishment was reduced from 171 officers and men at the time of the coalition to 53 in 1825, and the abandonment of Beaver River and the use of horses for transport between Edmonton and Fort Assiniboine had produced an immediate reduction of thirty men. This excellent result indicated the way in which Simpson's major economies almost always depended upon a revision of the transport system. Boats to replace canoes wherever possible, the amalgamation of brigades to give safety with economy, intelligent packing of outfits and use of craft, and the use of horses to make overland transport possible, were all ingredients in his reorganisation. But he was not always successful in his plans for new transport routes, nor was he always novel in his approach.

The idea of a Winter Road, for example, was an old one, important since settlement at Red River emphasised the need to get supplies up from York to Lake Winnipeg, and the equal need to bring produce out. James Bird had been told to improve the route, and when Robertson put the proposal forward again in 1828 Simpson and the council gave him full approval although Simpson reckoned that the road could only pay its costs if the colony produced each year at least three hundred tons of produce which could pay a freight of fifteen shillings a hundredweight to get it to the sea—a condition which was far from being fulfilled in 1826. Robertson's efforts failed, but Simpson thought the plan too sound and valuable to be abandoned because of one failure. He would have moved Norway House further down river had the Winter Road come up to expectations, and he gave the Winter Road a further chance in 1831, hoping to take a hundred tons each way by road in the winter of 1834-5. He was quite convinced that in the long run such a road would be essential if the interior country was ever to be developed.

The use of boats in place of canoes remained a fixed principle. Offset a little by the retention of the colourful light canoe as a special conveyance for the Governor, for senior officers on important missions, and for vital packets of letters, York boats dominated the transport system east of the mountains though some reaches, such as the journey up the Athabaska to the foot of the mountains, remained too difficult for them. To the west of the mountains, on the more dangerous rivers of that area, the canoe retained much of its importance—though it was often made of cedar rather than of birch bark—and there boats were constructed differently from the York boats and were managed by paddles instead of by oars. Care to cut costs of transportation, to make officers travel with their goods, to organise and expedite, was unrelenting; it produced a complete change in northern transportation, and it saved the Company thousands of pounds in every year.

Simpson did not leave the costs of transportation without a close analysis of the sea-transport system, a comparison of the costs of hired shipping with that owned by the Company, the extravagances of ships' officers, and the possibility of sending a ship to the Columbia in every other year instead of annually. He contemplated the use of a steam vessel between York and Red River, and he saw clearly the advantages which a steamer would give to the Company on the Pacific coast and secured the steamship *Beaver*, which revolutionised trade on the coast, in 1835.

Close behind Simpson's constant care for the transport system stood the less spectacular but equally important care for goods imported from England. This, indeed, showed an appreciation of fundamentals, for Simpson never strayed from the essentials. The costs of the concern came from expenses in wages and provisions, in transportation, and in trade-goods; and each in turn came under Simpson's review.

The close check and constant supervision of transportation caused a little murmuring and a few cases of disobedience and punishment, but on the whole the efficient organisation of transport appealed to all in the fur trade. The Governor's enthusiasm was shared by the *voyageurs*, and an element of competition for speed and of rivalry in carrying loads was common to all. So individual weaknesses had indeed to be disciplined but there was no deep opposition to be overcome. This was not so in the other major sphere of economy, the indents for goods. Here Simpson and the factors were officially of one mind, and equally intent to cut the costs of the outfits. But the habit of careless indenting for excessive supplies was deeply

ingrained and the hardships and loss of trade which could easily follow from a shortage were so real in men's memories as a result of the interrupted shipments of the war years that close indenting would need both courage and talent. It was sound to leave a margin for error; much of the indent was composed by filling in a set list by rigorous copying of the indents of former years. And always at the back of men's minds was the thought that perhaps the ship might not arrive and so a stock in hand would be life-saving, and the further thought that the Committee might so cut the indent that the factors ought to leave some 'fat' in it. Not many years since, in the height of competition, York had received only 195 large blankets of which the men needed 160, leaving far too few for the trade, while there was not a yard of cloth or of duffle, and the shipment was made up by a copious and needless supply of medicines!

From the start, Simpson treated the annual indent for goods with the care and imagination which it deserved. His first indent from Athabaska was a model of meticulous forethought, and he trained the whole of the Northern Department to the same approach. This was reasonably easy since the shrewd McTavish controlled the master accounts at York. The officers at the posts, too, were required to furnish every year registers of the Indians with whom they traded, copies of their journals and letters, and a general report 'conveying every requisite information in regard to the present state resources and mode of conducting the trade, the number of Hands employed, Families supported, Posts occupied, means of subsistence, conduct and characters of Officers and men, climate soil and vegetable productions accompanied with a comparative statement of Returns, together with such further suggestions in regard to amelioration or improvement as may occur'. There was therefore no lack of detailed information upon which forecasts could be based, nor of ability or enthusiasm to master the detail and put it to use.

The task was approached with an emphasis on economy which lasted through the régime, and in turn the Committee was asked to specify the names of the tradesmen who supplied the goods, so that the traders could comment on the quality and price of the product. Extravagance of all kinds was savagely cut, regardless of the persons concerned; and the Committee themselves were by no means immune from the attacks of the Governor-economist. 'Many of the articles received last year are at very extravagant prices arising from their superior quality' he wrote in 1822. Blankets, in particular, seemed much too heavy and closely woven for the trade; the Indians

would be well content with an article up to twenty per cent. lighter. At the same time he criticised the workmanship of the English blacksmith and proposed that most of the smith's work should be done in the country, and he complained of the tobacco supplied and suggested that his own tradesmen might prepare that also, along with slop-clothing and other goods then sent out in a finished state.

Quality, however, was not to be sacrificed; blankets, for example, must be rich, bright and carefully dyed. Of recent years, he wrote in 1844, the red had degenerated into a rusty brown and the dyes had eaten into the fabric. In this, as in all trade-goods, Simpson merely wanted to introduce a sense of reality and to secure good quality without supplying superfine goods, of better quality than the trade needed or could stand. But shoddy and ill-made goods were roundly castigated, and Simpson soon learned the simple but important checks which were necessary—the quality and thickness of roll tobacco, the fineness and dryness of gunpowder, the quality of twine needed for net-making, and the temper of iron-work required—and himself checked the goods offered or supplied.

The first problem here was to disperse the stocks remaining on hand from the period of competition, especially the North West accumulations at Fort William. The Committee hoped in the first flush of the new management to cut the goods remaining at each post by 1st June, 1822, down to the bare minimum necessary to conduct the summer trade, to run down the hoards at Fort William over a period of years, and to leave the depots at Moose and at York with enough goods in reserve to make up two years' supplies of all essentials, in case the ship should fail. In general Simpson and the Council agreed with these basic principles, and much care was spent on the indents, and on the reduction of stocks in hand. With plans for sending forward the outfits during the winter, to Norway House, Split Lake, the Rock or whatever inland depot might prove most satisfactory, it was necessary to keep those goods an extra year in the country. But the elasticity gained was invaluable. By comparison with the old system in which the brigades brought the furs to York, Churchill, Moose or Albany in time for them to be checked and packed, waited at the post until the ship came (if it had not already arrived), took their outfits almost direct from the ship and started back to the posts, the depot method allowed time for system and safety. The Council, too, was content to keep only one year's supplies on hand as an insurance against the failure of the ship, so interest on the cost of the goods in hand was not more than the Committee had bargained for. The system was so worked that when

the outfits had been sent inland the depots were left with a full year's supplies of the essential articles of trade, and with half a year's supplies of the articles which might be dispensed with in case of the loss of the outward-bound ship; the distinction between essentials and luxuries was a loose one, but obviously blankets, ammunition and tobacco fell into the one category and beads, bells, sugar, lace and finery, in the other.

The practice was sensible, the Governor and Committee accepted it, and it provided for a hazard which remained even after the development of transport routes from Canada and the United States had made it possible to hustle supplies up to the colony and to Norway House in years of emergency. For ships and ships' captains remained chances of the trade, a summer of heavy fogs in the Strait and Bay could delay arrival for the essential three weeks during which the outfits had to be sent inland, and a clockwork correspondence could still be upset by lack of small craft and delays in unloading. The period is one of constant pre-occupation with the ship of the year, a necessary reminder of the fact that when the Company was granted the sole right of navigation to the shores of the Bay it was indeed given control of a fundamental economic asset—but an asset which required the greatest skill, courage and forethought, to bring to fruition. Navigation of the Bay was far from being a self-evident, automatic, way to wealth, as Simpson well knew. He had come first to the Northern Department when its trade was still suffering from the loss of the *Britannia*, burned at her moorings at York in 1818, and when the supplies for the next year had been gravely endangered by the leaky state of the *Prince of Wales* in 1819. As the trade began to shape itself to his hand, he found in 1824 that the *Eastmain* sloop, crazy and badly managed, had run aground, been abandoned, and been burned by Indians on a voyage from Severn to York. Moose had that year (1824) failed to send up a sloop to York, according to the normal arrangement, and so there were no craft save small open boats to unload the ship from England, and the delays and dangers might well have proved serious.

The problem was not confined to the Bay and to the trade from the east side of the mountains. In his journeys to the Columbia Simpson was constantly probing the shipping situation, the uses to which ships could be put when winter brought an end to navigation on the north-west coast, the defects of ships' officers, and the dangers of the mouth of Columbia River. His solution was the introduction of the famous steamer *Beaver* into the coastal trade and the purchase of the equally famous schooner, the *Cadboro*, which arrived

from England in 1827 and which at the end of her career was still a 'very handy useful vessel' which had been of the greatest value for twenty years. For contact with England, Simpson and the Councils were committed to a constant struggle to conduct the Columbia trade on the basis of one shipment out round the Horn in every second year, instead of annually, and of laying off the cost of such expensive freight by transporting supplies for the Russians, by calling at the Sandwich Islands or on the Californian coast, or by engaging in the timber trade.

Here, as to the east of the Rockies, the problem rose from the need to keep necessary supplies on hand without carrying excessive amounts in store. This was a constant pre-occupation, for which innumerable instances could be vouched. Perhaps the events of 1843 show the issue in as clear a light as any. Simpson had himself arrived from England in April, so he knew all the arrangements for the year and when, having completed a summer tour to Red River, Moose and the Southern Department, he arrived back at Montreal to find news that the *Graham* had not arrived at York by 6th September, and the *Prince Albert* had not reached Moose by 19th, he had good cause for worry even though one ship, the *Prince Rupert*, had already delivered her cargo at York in mid-August. Emergency measures were put into use, cargo was ordered up to Norway House from Canada and even from the United States, and reserves were drawn upon. So the outfits were got off by the time Dr. John Rae, coming to Montreal to prepare for his first journey of discovery, had completed his epic journey from Moose to Lachine. He brought news that the ships had been held by late ice, and both were safely unladen. It had been a worrying episode, safely passed, one example of the constant care needed if trade-goods were to be got safely and cheaply into the country.

In the last resort there remained an imponderable element in this careful planning. Even in the full enthusiasm for efficiency and their share of the profits of the trade, Simpson and his factors accepted the old policy, that the Indians must be kept from starvation. In bad years they supplied free ammunition, twine and fish-hooks, and some food. The expenditure was not great; but the unqualified acceptance of the policy alike in London and in Rupert's Land indicates acceptance of the underlying reality, that the fur trade depends on natural conditions which are beyond control.

During the middle years of the nineteenth century beaver became less and less the staple of the Company's trade. It was both more difficult to get and more difficult to sell. Though there were still

many years in which beaver made a substantial contribution to profits the beaver came, for the most part, from frontier districts and often from south of the American boundary, while the Company's own territories made their returns in a miscellany of furs of which the two greatest contributors were martens and muskrats. Martens found a ready market in Germany; muskrats were largely sold to New York on contract. This was a method of trade inherited from the North West Company, who had sold all their muskrats on contract to a New York firm. It was a tricky trade, in which delivery at Montreal or at New York was an important factor. So delivery was affected by the amount of canoe freight which could be sent to Montreal in the brigades carrying retiring servants, and grease from the Saskatchewan for the Lake Superior posts. The rats which could find no place in these canoes had to be shipped to England from York and would be re-shipped back from England to New York. Furthermore, muskrats were a skin in which John Jacob Astor delighted at times to speculate. But the greatest uncertainty in the increasingly important muskrat trade lay simply in the fact that the catch was unpredictable. In normal years muskrats made the Saskatchewan the most flourishing district within the Company's control. But in years of drought, when the great river and its tributaries fell, muskrats disappeared and the traders knew that there would be no more good returns until another season of high water.

Uncertainty affected even the policy of rest and recuperation for beaver. When, for example, in 1844 Simpson and the Council decided that the policy might be relaxed, and that in the Bay-side posts the Indians might as an experiment be allowed to kill beaver with the ice-chisel (but not with traps), the experiment was quite useless. Beaver prices in England were low, the frontier districts produced more than enough beaver for the market, and the Indians found lynxes and martens so numerous that they did not in fact avail themselves of the relaxation. Attempts to offset such uncertainty by laying down a beaver farm near Oxford Lake and another on Charlton Island were purely experimental, and plans for the trade had to be laid within the limitations imposed by the uncertainty of the hunts.

Yet something of a pattern began to emerge as Simpson gathered authority and as the goods left on hand from the period of rivalry were dispersed. In 1830 the indent for the Northern Department stood at £40,000 and Simpson declared he would not again let it surpass £26,000. It was down to £20,000 by 1832 and was still being cut. This it is true, was subject to violent fluctuations, as,

when it dropped to a mere £10,000 in 1832 because the Saskatchewan had fallen in 1831 and the muskrat trade had failed. But taking one year with another £25,000 was a fair maximum figure for the yearly shipment of goods to the Bay, and by 1843 Simpson had cut the needs of the Northern Department to the cargo of one ship instead of two, and had decided that no further reduction was possible. By that period the Northern Department's indent ran at about £11,000 to £12,500, that for the Southern Department at a more uncertain figure ranging from about £6,500 to about £15,000. Petty traders in opposition made it impossible to stabilise the trade of the Southern Department, and though in 1844 Simpson prepared a 'Standard Requisition' at the level of £10,000 this was done as a check only, and not under any illusion that the actual figures in any one year would bear any close relationship to this figure. In fact the indent for 1844 amounted only to £6,500 and in 1845 to £6,412, at which level the department was provided with a hundred per cent. reserve of essentials and a twenty-five per cent. reserve of non-essentials. In addition to the two old areas of the Company's trade, importations for Red River amounted in the 1840's to about £4,000 a year, and the whole business was dominated by the Columbia Department, whose demands came to about £18,000 to £21,000 a year—often as much as the rest of the trade put together.

The rough balance, with Columbia about equal to the two older departments, and the Northern Department almost twice as active as the Southern, was not preserved for the remainder of the period to 1870. The changes after about 1844 came, however, not with economies and new practices inside the departments but with transference of responsibility from one department to another. Thus, for example, in 1856 the indent for the Northern Department soared to £33,000 because the Red River posts, which had previously been considered separately, were then included, and it remained near £30,000 until 1859, when it dropped equally suddenly because of plans to supply the Saskatchewan District from America on a separate indent. A further attempt to cut, in 1867, by twenty-five per cent. was held to be unrealistic since it overlooked the fact that the Saskatchewan, Swan Lake and Rainy Lake posts, had come back on to the Northern Department's indent.

Little more economy was possible. Indeed there were murmurings that 'the system' had gone too far. The policy of rest and recuperation proved a chancey remedy, and from the middle of the century fur returns from the main areas of the Company's territory steadily declined. The bulk was maintained by the Columbia trade and its

satellites in the Snake Country and New Caledonia, and in part by Mackenzie River. For the rest, as trade fell off the indents were cut, and supplies to the Indians diminished, so that economy kept profits steady even in times of falling trade. Some claimed that this was not economy but parsimony, a sordid pursuit of profit. Profit and economy were certainly at the root of the matter, for this was after all a trading company. But apart from the merits or demerits of the Company's age-old policy towards the Indians there was something attractive even in the policy of economy as enunciated by Simpson. 'This', he wrote of Rupert's River, 'is precisely that description of management which I am anxious to see established throughout this Country, having for its end strict economy, great regularity, the comfort and convenience of the natives, the improvement of the Country, and the most minute attention to every branch of the business'.

The traders, under such methods, could look forward to handsome rewards. But the fur returns cannot be set too closely against the prices of the goods expended in getting them. Apart from overhead costs for the London establishment, shipping and other transport costs, wages and provisions for the men, the outfits had to bear varying interest-charges. The Northern and Southern Departments could reckon that goods paid for in England in the late summer of one year would be traded at the posts during that same winter and the following spring, so that the furs would be shipped home and sold in the next autumn and the outfit would have to carry an interest-charge for little more than a year. Mackenzie River was a notable exception. Transport to that distant district had been reorganised in 1821, so that the outfit was sent up to Norway House during the winter and was then taken up to Portage la Loche as soon as the rivers broke up; there the Mackenzie River brigade with the fur-returns of the previous year met the outfit, took it over and set out immediately for Mackenzie River again while the brigade brought the furs down to Norway House and so to York. Simpson made an effort to cut this system in 1826, but it remained a tedious and costly route, and it kept the period of each outfit to the minimum of two years instead of one before the furs were sold and the money realised. For the Columbia Department the long voyage round Cape Horn meant that the heavy capital outlay for that department was two years on hand before it was even distributed to the posts. Indents were, for example, entitled 'Shipment 1846, Outfit 1848'; and a further three years at least then elapsed before the furs could be got down to the coast, shipped home and sold in London.

It was of course true that, each in its sphere, Mackenzie River and the Columbia Department were the most fruitful of the Company's territories. But that only made it the more of a handicap that they suffered from such delays in transportation.

The contrast between costs of indents and value of returns must therefore not be too easily accepted as a measure of the efficiency of the system which Simpson had introduced. A random selection of the figures is nevertheless most instructive. In 1843, for example, Simpson analysed the trade of the Southern Department for the previous year and concluded that the profits of that department were £19,200. The indent for the year was only £6,500, and profits (achieved by economy in the face of a decline in returns) were about £1,300 less than the average for the ten years from 1830 to 1839. Ten years later a Northern Department indent for £14,000 stood against furs worth £78,872; the indent for 1857 was for £30,800 as against returns of £116,225 in that year. The indent dropped in 1859 to £19,755, and the returns then also dropped to £112,733. So through the years—goods costed at about £20,000 produced furs valued at about £80,000 to £100,000, and so in proportion.

Such figures may appear iniquitous, and it is certainly true that the Company entertained no ideas on the Just Price which could not be covered by the maxim that 'No man should complain who gets a bargain of his own making'. But, even for the Indians, policy was modified and mitigated by Simpson's edict (of 1831) that 'the best and most effectual way of encouraging the natives to industry is by paying them liberally for their skins, by which means our supplies in due time become so necessary to them as to make them in a certain measure dependent on us'. Opposition, too, gave the Indians alternative markets in large areas, and the contrast between indents and returns was not always encouraging—as when the profits for the whole Columbia Department dropped to £2,600 in 1844, or when the Northern Department's indent for 1863 was driven up to over £56,000.

The Company was constantly reaching out in the hope of a trade with unsophisticated savages, but for the most part it dealt with experienced and uncompromising bargainers, on whom little sympathy need be wasted. They took their fur to the best market even when it was already contracted for 'debt'. A feature of the fur trade had always been the existence of tribes who controlled access to European trade and took heavy toll from the hunters; the French had found the Iroquois in that position round Montreal, Henday had shown that the Crees served this function for the Indians of the

Plains and the Mountains, and west of the Rockies the Chinook tribe served a similar function for those who wished to trade on the coast.

Nor need the officers of the Company demand sympathy. Their share of the profits of trade was worth £550 a year to each Chief Trader and £1,100 a year to each Chief Factor by 1827—and those were very substantial sums indeed for men living at the Company's expense. From 1821 to 1872 the Chief Trader's share of the profits averaged £360 a year and the Chief Factor's £720; the single share averaged about £400 a year up to 1840 and then declined to about £308 by 1857, after which it fluctuated from a high point of £872 10s. 1d. in 1855 down to £248 1s. 8d. in 1860.

Yet, making all allowances for overhead costs, and fluctuations, and for the abuses, speculation and recrimination, which were bound to arise in half a century's trade on so vast a scale, these were years of such prosperity as the Company had never yet known. Total profits on a year's working ran about the level of £60,000, and from 1825 onwards to 1863 the stockholders received a steady dividend of ten per cent. In 1842, 1845, and again in 1860 this dividend was raised to fifteen per cent., and almost continuously from 1828 to 1841 (the two exceptions were 1834 and 1837) the dividend was enhanced by a bonus which ranged from an extra thirteen per cent. down to a mere five per cent. It is not surprising that the market price of the stock should for most of the period be well over £200 for a £100 share, and although at times dividends were only maintained by payments from reserves, the true profits were shown from year to year in the payments made to the factors and traders. These reveal the competence of the closely integrated machine which Simpson had built up, and show that though there was room for two government enquiries as to the principles and practices of the trade, and although the moving frontier of settlement was close on the fur-trader's heels, methods and management were well matched to the task which faced the Company in the middle years of the nineteenth century.

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CHAPTER XX

THE COMPANY, THE COLONY AND OPPOSITION TRADERS

When Halkett had set the colony on its feet in 1822, Simpson had found himself in an equivocal position. On the one hand stood the Chief Factors and Chief Traders, anxious that the fur trade should not bear the costs of settlement; on the other hand stood the Governor and Committee, determined that the colony should not be sacrificed to the trade and that the colonists should get their supplies at costs which they could afford, regardless of the contribution which the colony-shop might make to profits. This was a matter on which Simpson and his council were forced to accept an unequivocal order that the colony must be maintained. For the fur trade this was only one part of the consequences of settlement, derived from the peculiar condition that supplies could only be got to Red River by the long and costly route through York. The fur trade could afford to supply goods at a loss, provided the colony fulfilled a useful purpose as a source of active servants, a home for retired pensioners, a producer of pemmican and grain, and a bulwark against American penetration.

But none of these advantages could be gained if the settlers were allowed to become rivals in the fur trade itself, and the whole policy adopted towards the colony must be taken as against a basic determination not to permit rivalry within the trade. All else was acceptable save this; and the end of the period was in plain sight when this point, by then largely valueless, was conceded. The Licence of Exclusive Trade granted in 1821 was a valuable privilege, but it was like so much of the Company's history, a privilege whose importance depended upon unremitting care and foresight for its practical effect. Simpson and his councils certainly could not take refuge behind the Charter. For them opposition was a constant threat; and Red River Colony was always a potential source of opposition.

His first winter tour of his department had left Simpson convinced that at least he must insist that the colony should not be a base for opposition in trading furs from Indians. A handful of petty traders, with a background of experience as employees of one company or the other during the opposition, were causing considerable trouble but, Simpson thought, were doing but little good to them-

selves. It would be necessary to check them by seizing their property and making a public show of the Company's determination, for the very rumour of opposition would disorganise the Indians of the most distant establishment in the country. Augustin Nolin (not the Louis Nolin who helped Robertson to re-establish the colony), Larance and Forrest were the main trouble at Red River, and though the problem was unified by Indian reaction, and Simpson rightly connected the petty traders at Red River with opposition from rivals in Rainy Lake, Swan River, Pembina and the Lake Superior District, he was able to draw a clear and important distinction. Much of the opposition in the Rainy Lake, Pembina, Swan River and Turtle Mountains areas came from traders who were outfitted by Americans based on the Missouri River system, and the Company could do little to counteract this except to trade on terms which attracted the Indians. Similarly the country which drained into Lake Superior lay within the Province of Upper Canada and was not comprised in the grant of exclusive trade. Opposition in this district from traders outfitted at Sault Ste. Marie, Montreal and Quebec, from lumberers trading furs as a side-line, or from Americans coming north to exploit their neighbours' wealth, could only be met by vigilant management. The Committee agreed with Simpson that 'this is a frontier and may be made a cover and protection to our own proper Country'.

But though Red River lay near the political frontier it was not a frontier in the sense that opposition had to be met there on equal terms. There was no doubt that Assiniboia stood within the Company's chartered territories, and that settlement and trade there must, at least to be legal, take place within the terms set out in the grant to Selkirk. It had been finally decided that the death of Selkirk would not in any way affect the footing upon which the settlement stood in relation to the Company; and while such a decision meant that the colony was to receive support it also meant that the Company's interests stood foremost. The Company entered its *Caveat* against the Legislature of Upper Canada extending its jurisdiction even as far as Fort William, and there was no question of its authority in Assiniboia. So Nolin and the petty traders were easily reduced, all the more so because they were economically unstable.

Nolin, like most of the petty traders, had needed a 'concern' to finance him. But even with some backing from Canadian merchants his credit was bad and his trade in difficulty. On the advice of Captain Matthey, a de Meuron officer who had no love for the Company, Nolin tried in vain to get a loan of £600 from the Selkirk

estate, to enable him to carry on his trade; then Matthey pledged himself to the Company so as to get an outfit of goods for Nolin from the Company's store—a pledge which the Company insisted upon. Nolin was therefore operating upon credit reluctantly advanced by Matthey, out of dislike for the Company rather than from enthusiasm for Nolin, and the goods with which he traded came from the Company's store. Simpson treated Matthey generously up to a point, in the hope that he might thus secure the loyal support of the de Meurons, but in 1824 Matthey retired to London and Simpson and the Governor of the colony, Alexander Macdonell, pressed home their claims against him, and Nolin was left with no financial backing.

Nor was this all; Macdonell the 'Grasshopper Governor' (so-called by the colonists because he proved as great a destroyer within doors as the grasshoppers in the fields) was replaced by Captain Andrew Bulger in 1822, and Bulger proved infinitely more active and painstaking than his predecessor. He represented the determination of the Governor and Committee not to allow the fur trade to victimise the settlers. On the whole, Simpson and the traders were in no position to dispute this decision or to challenge the position of Bulger and the Council of Assiniboia, to which the duties of governance were delegated. But the Company's post at Lower Red River was managed in 1822 by that staunch upholder of the fur-traders' rights, the forthright and assertive John Clarke.

Clarke had not fitted in well with the redistribution of posts at the coalition; he would not easily accept regimentation and economy, and the Northwesters found him hard to forgive and accept. He had therefore, despite his obvious good health, been given a year's leave of absence on grounds of sickness and was ready to hand in 1822, to be appointed Chief Factor for Lower Red River District. His orders to sell goods at the colony shop at prices fixed at a fifty-eight per cent. advance on those at York Fort, and to support and maintain the colony, fitted in well with the point of view which Halkett so strongly represented. But Clarke would be an uncompromising opponent to private trade, and in the course of his winter at Lower Red River he ran into considerable difficulties with Bulger, the sturdy friend of peace and order. At the end of the year Bulger had decided to retire to England, and the Council had decided to remove Clarke to Swan Lake; but he had in the meantime carried out Simpson's determination and had seized the property of the petty traders. He gave them formal notice and then took the furs which they had traded and the trade-goods which they had, so that Simpson

complacently noted that they were all ruined men whom it would be kindness to pay, and Nolin was forced to plead ignorance of the regulations and to accept the compensation with gratitude.

Not for another twenty years were the petty traders of Red River to worry the fur trade. As Donald McKenzie succeeded Clarke in charge of the Company's affairs and Robert Parker Pelly came as Governor of Assiniboia, with Simpson instructed to winter at the settlement and give it his personal attention, it became clearer than ever that the settlers were entirely dependent on the Company's stores, and that the petty traders could be used by the Company to check its rivals. For although the petty traders had been brought to heel within the colony itself, that was only one aspect of the problem; behind the petty traders lay the market to which they would sell their furs—and that lay south of the frontier. The serious problem was, not so much to crush the petty traders, for they were only the superficial symptoms of trouble, but to counteract the pull of the alternative market in which the petty traders would dispose of their furs. That done, the petty traders would soon lose heart. The difficulties of repulsing the American traders were, however, great; for the Company must be meticulously careful not in any way to infringe the frontier, ill-defined though the frontier might be.

There had been little knowledge available when the original American frontier had been drawn up in 1783, and in parts the line then drawn was simply impossible; the frontier for example was supposed to run due west from the north-west point of Lake of the Woods until it hit the Mississippi. Nor was any more satisfactory detail written into the Treaty of Ghent in 1814, when the boundary, it was agreed, should not be surveyed beyond the point at which it cut the 49th Parallel, after which the parallel was to be the frontier, as arranged at the subsequent Treaty of 1818. But the 49th Parallel placed much of the land granted to Selkirk south of the boundary. American pressure, military and fur-trading, was heavy upon the frontier, for the American Fur Company was revived and reorganised by Astor, and Congress decreed in 1816 that the Indian trade on American territory could only be carried on by American citizens (and that subject to licence). As the British withdrew from Prairie du Chien American troops followed them, negotiated treaties with the Indians, and established military outposts in the upper Mississippi and Red River valleys.

Astor was the great organiser in this politico-economic expansion; but the most serious opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company's trade came not from Astor but from the small traders who came up

from the south. Selkirk, and James Bird as the Company's representative, had in 1816 almost concluded an 'arrangement' with Robert Dixon, who got his outfit for the Sioux trade up from the Mississippi. The Company's attitude to the independent trader with American backing followed these lines throughout. On his first winter tour of 1822-3 Simpson realised that the serious danger to the Company's position at Red River lay in the nearness of the American frontier, and towards the end of the tour he learned of an American from Prairie du Chien who had set up at Fort Douglas and seemed likely to seduce the half-breed Rainville, whom the Company had outfitted to trade the furs taken by the Sioux. This American was Hercules Dousman, who had once contracted to supply a much-needed flock of sheep to the settlers, and who in 1822 was offering to supply the settlers, and even the Company's store, with tobacco, flour, pork and spirits. This was a matter in which the ordinary mercantile considerations of price and quality decided, and it was along these lines that Simpson met the American opposition which lay behind the petty traders.

Along the frontier Simpson had to face opposition throughout his career. But in the colony itself he simply outbid his rivals and took their offers to trade on a cash basis. In 1824, for example, he made enquiries from the Columbia Fur Company of St. Louis to see whether he could with advantage buy tobacco and other goods from its agent and sell him furs. The deal fell through because prices were too high, the connection was not sufficiently solid and respectable, and the danger of the Sioux interrupting the traffic was too heavy. No mention was made of the Company's right to exclusive trade, and at a later period when circumstances were more propitious Simpson had no hesitation over getting supplies from the States or selling furs to Americans.

But while Simpson was prepared to disarm the American-backed petty trader within the colony by trading on better terms both to get the American supplies and to buy the Indians' furs, he was careful not to invade American territory. He blandly reported to the Committee that the frontier had been scrupulously respected and that there had been no collision. But while the Company refused to trade with Indians who lived and hunted south of the boundary the Company's store sold goods at favourable terms to settlers who, as the Company's officers well knew, then set off to trade the hunts of Indians who would otherwise go to the Americans. From the Company's point of view, both sale of goods and subsequent purchase of furs were cash transactions, the settlers were acting on their own

account, the Company had not commissioned them and it was no part of the Company's duty to police the frontier. But the prices at which the Company carried on its business meant that the rivalry was carried to the American side of the frontier and the fur trade of Lower Red River was secured by this invasion of the opposition's territory.

Reasonable prices were the key to this problem. Given the sort of management upon which Simpson insisted, and the advantages of purchase in the English market and shipment through the Bay, he could force the opposition to accept formidable losses and could himself show a profit. The Company's shop at Fort Garry was therefore kept abundantly supplied, the prices were set according to a fifty-eight per cent. advance on York prices, and the costs of freight were also strictly controlled. By 1830 the shop was selling above £7,000 worth of goods a year; this was more than the settlers could afford unless the colony could produce some cash crop which would replace the purchasing power derived from the savings of the retired servants of the Company, who were steadily running through their accumulated balances. But while Simpson was worried that the settlers, as a body, were spending more at the shop than they had earned, they were loud in their complaints that the shop gave them only necessities and no luxuries.

The luxuries of such a society were tobacco, piece-good cottons and woollens, and spirits; and in the last item in particular the colony felt the Company's policy. In 1824 it was decreed that all sales to colonists must be for cash, and that spirituous liquors should be sold in limited quantities to servants only, a veto on sales to the colonists which was relaxed in 1825 to the extent of allowing them to have a hundred and fifty nine-gallon kegs and no more. It is not, therefore, surprising that a considerable trade to supply the settlers came up from the States. To this there was no serious objection as long as such goods could be paid for without involving the purchaser in the fur trade and without involving the Company in the business of negotiating drafts on London and New York. Indeed, the Company was itself prepared to trade on fair terms for American supplies, and although Clarke during his year of office had brusquely forbidden all trade except at the Company's store, the Committee had in 1823 rescinded this decision and had ordered that private individuals might trade in all goods except in furs and leather.

In this matter commercial practice was paramount. The Company was not anxious to maintain any monopoly of the retail supply-trade and to make itself responsible for maintaining at Red River the

volume and range of goods which the colonists required. On the contrary, it was anxious to get responsible colonists to set up shop, order the goods required, and meet the responsibility. Such responsible men, who could buy wholesale and carry a store for redistribution, were not easily forthcoming. But the Company tried to encourage them, shipped goods from England via York Fort on their account, and placed no obstacle in the way of their buying from American suppliers. The trade from Red River to St. Peter and St. Louis has nevertheless been called a 'smuggled trade'; it was so only to the extent to which it brought in goods which contravened the revenue laws, and to the extent to which it contravened the Company's embargo on the trade in skins and leather. Later, it called for criticism from Simpson for the way in which payment was achieved.

From 1820 onwards the Committee had sent out a supply of banknotes for use as small currency within the Company's territories. These were in denominations of one pound, five shillings, and one shilling, and were issued under close scrutiny to employees and retired employees who held credit balances with the Company. Their effect was to simplify the spending of such credits at the Company's stores, especially at the Red River store, and they soon became the circulating medium for most small transactions, supplemented for larger purchases by direct drafts payable in London. Whether banknotes or direct drafts were used, the Company was involved, and the result was that the trader could secure the goods against a draft on the Company in which no interest-element was included. But by the time his bill had been taken to the United States, carried to London for presentation, paid there, been converted into a draft on New York and Boston, and set against the buyer's credit with the Company, as much as two years might well elapse.

Such a system had two results, both damaging to the Company. In the first place the private trader got the free use of his money for the two years during which his draft was being passed to and fro; he also often profited by the exchange rate between Halifax currency in which he bought and sterling in which the Company met the draft; in either case he could trade on favourable terms. Secondly, the whole system meant that a credit machinery which had grown up to facilitate purchases within the Company was being utilized to finance external operations. The drafts and notes were freely negotiated, and delay in payment was a factor which of necessity showed in the rate at which the notes changed hands. In part this was

managed by making contracts initiated in Halifax currency payable in sterling, which gave an advantage of about two shillings in the pound. In part the remedy was found by selling bills on the Company at a discount to allow for delayed payment. In any case the private trader drew an advantage and the Company's credit was slightly discounted; and Simpson by 1844 was urging the Committee to devise a remedy.

By that time for almost a generation the private trader within the colony had caused no serious unrest and provoked no serious action. Simpson had indeed foreseen that the banknotes might be used to pay traders who were outside the Company's system and that they would raise the problem of interest payment, and he had delayed the initial issue. But the lack of a circulating medium of exchange had led to such troubles that he had capitulated and during a formative period of twenty years the Company had acted as banker for the private traders and had financed their purchases from Canada and the United States.

While the private trader was thus tolerated and even encouraged, the team of Simpson, Pelly and Donald Mackenzie, was bringing the colony to its feet. Most of the troubles of the settlement arose from the personalities involved; the peculiar relation of the settlement to the Company was but an additional factor. Apart from the defects of the Swiss and the de Meurons as settlers, and the slow development of the retired trader and his half-breed children into active and industrious farmers, the colony normally made up for its isolation by the richness of its soil. But in the early years of the coalition nature seemed to work against the settlers. In 1822 they faced famine; no buffalo were to be seen, the corn crop failed and the colonists were left at the end of harvest with little more than would serve for seed for the next year. In 1823 Upper Red River was over-run by fires, and once more very few buffalo were to be seen and the provision trade failed. Decline in the buffalo hunts was all the more important because the grain harvest was uncertain. Locusts had reappeared at Red River in 1818 and again in 1819 a new hatch had appeared to devour the crops; there was not even enough left for seed-corn, and a party had to go to the Americans at Prairie du Chien for supplies. In 1820 and 1821 the locusts again appeared, but they were declining in effect and from 1821 onwards they disappeared. Still the crops were so unproductive that the almost total failure of the buffalo hunt in 1822 left Simpson depressed by 'the most distressing scene of starvation that can well be conceived'.

The great flood of 1826 completed the work which the locusts had begun. The colony was prostrate, but the Company supported the Scots and Orkneymen who remained on their lands, and the Swiss, de Meurons, Canadians and half-breeds, whom the flood drove to America were on the whole well lost to the colony. The flood, too, seemed to mark the end of the natural disasters. In 1826 the crops had been productive, and the 'new mill' (actually the old one brought out by Lord Selkirk but now at last got to work) began to function, and the flour proved fine and sound. Stability had come at last, and by 1830 Simpson was writing that the colonists were happy and comfortable, that the means of living were abundant, the back plains were covered with herds of cattle, the banks of the river were highly cultivated, the river was almost alive with fish and the prospects of crops were flattering. To his shrewd eye but one thing was lacking to make Red River a thriving settlement—trade. Though the means of living were abundant and cheap the people as a whole were poor, for there was little paid employment to bring them wages, and the savings of the former fur-traders were almost exhausted.

Some sort of attempt to give the settlers a market for their produce had been made when the Company began to buy their surplus flour, barley, butter and pease as well as the Indian corn which had earlier been sought. The quality of such produce was uneven, and the fur trade suffered (from rancid butter and dirty flour) that the colony might benefit. Simpson, anxious to buy the Company's requirements from the colony, tried to establish an alternative to the dirty 'ice-barn' farmers (who threshed their wheat and kept their meat alike on the insanitary ice-floor of their unsavoury barns) by buying the wheat in the ear and getting it milled according to the Company's specification. The remedy was not completely satisfactory, and the amount of farm produce could never be predicted from year to year.

Normal agricultural surpluses were therefore not the complete answer from the point of view of the Company, or the colony. The planned and purposeful production of a marketable staple was necessary; and Simpson, having once decided that a market was necessary if the colony was to survive, made endless (and often costly) attempts to foster such production. In the very early days of the colony the buffalo seemed likely to provide this, as well as to supplement the food of the settlers. But the Buffalo Wool Company proved a resounding failure, as Simpson and others had feared. By 1824 Simpson was determined to give no further credit and had

become reconciled to the conclusion that the Buffalo Wool Company must be a total loss under Pritchard—and in the end the Governor and Committee had to write off a debt of about £4,500 on this score. Both the Governor and Committee, and Simpson and Council, had been anxious to take a generous view of the arrangements with the Buffalo Wool Company, and to the last Simpson thought that under other management it might have proved workable. But it had failed, and it had diverted much labour and enterprise from the necessary business of agriculture.

Simpson therefore began to plan other cash crops. In turn he gave the Company's support to growths of sheep, cattle, hemp and flax, while behind such ventures lay an overall project for a highly-capitalised 'Experimental Farm' which would pioneer new crops and new methods and would, by help and example, lead the colonists to develop their resources in such a way as to find their market from grain and roots. His normal thinking on such problems led him to offer the facilities of the Company for the purchase and transportation of the equipment, cattle or seed, required, to be prepared even to grant credit for these purposes, and to work on the assumption that the Company would buy the produce at fair prices. But for the finance of such projects he expected that the residents, especially those retired fur-traders who had balances with the Company, would form a joint-stock concern. This had been the pattern of the Buffalo Wool Company, and it was a pattern which was followed in the Assiniboine Wool Company for sheep farming and in the Tallow Company which Simpson also fostered. With more emphasis on the individual and less on a joint-stock this was the pattern which Simpson had in mind for the development of retail stores in the colony and for the outfitting of independent traders to rival the Americans on the frontier. It was the pattern to which he reverted when, in the 1840's, the colony was firmly-based and thriving, and it became a point of policy to provide a market for the grain surpluses by setting up a distillery.

Taking the lead in this way, Simpson and the fur traders were accepting grave responsibilities. But there was inevitably an atmosphere of speculation about the 'delusive and vexatious experiments' which resulted, and both Simpson as Governor and the fur-traders who supported his projects came in for much (not unwarranted) abuse from the settlers. Such criticism rose not only from the failure of the schemes but also from the speculation which inevitably accompanied such ventures; and when no joint-stock company was involved to diffuse the risks and the profits, abuse was even louder.

For flax and hemp, for example, there seemed little need of heavy capital expenditure. It was a smallholders' scheme in which a flax-mill represented the chief capital outlay and in which the provision of seed and the guarantee of a market were the prime necessities since the soil was propitious. So the Company provided seed and built a costly mill, and not only promised a safe market but offered a premium on all the flax and hemp produced. The consequence was the production of more than could be handled, so that much was allowed to rot. The scheme ended in the discontinuance of flax and hemp as soon as the premiums were withdrawn, after the first three years. Since the seed could only be got from the Company and was in limited supply, it soon became a common accusation that 'a favourite few, by the connivance of those in power', bought all the seed and monopolised the premiums for the three years during which the scheme was in operation. The effort showed the capacity to produce flax and hemp at Red River, but it certainly failed to establish a body of men devoted to this culture, and so failed to give the colony a market based on these growths.

Sheep seemed to lend themselves to optimistic ventures even more than flax and hemp. Selkirk had hoped to import stock, and the few rams and ewes which were brought up from Fort William prospered although there was a widespread feeling that wolves and the hard winter would make it impossible to keep flocks at Red River. In 1831 Simpson turned again to a sheep project and ordered up a flock from the United States. Since 1828 he had been in correspondence with American stockmen in an effort to get a flock sent up from St. Louis, and had got several fur-traders to invest in a Joint Stock Wool Concern; but the difficulties of the long route had held the flocks, and by 1831 Simpson was desperately making arrangements to send to Prairie du Chien instead. At the same time he wrote to England for some merino ewes and rams, with the intention of crossing them with those got from Fort William. But bringing sheep across difficult country which was liable to be the scene of Sioux raids proved impossible; in 1832 no sheep had arrived at the colony from St. Louis, and the Assiniboine Wool Company, the inflated joint-stock association of settlers who were prepared to gamble on sheep, abandoned the project.

Simpson was himself in some doubt over sheep at this time. There were few in the colony who understood the management of flocks, and it seemed very doubtful whether they would be able to get their food in winter through the snow. For a time he turned towards the establishment of an experimental farm, of which the sheep project

would be but one aspect; at the same time Simpson was working on the possibility of establishing herds of cattle as a basis for a tallow trade, was setting up a mill in private hands, and was hoping that the Winter Road might give the colony a more active and varied economy. The settlers must have a market for some of their produce, so that they could get power to buy the cloth, ironware, china and household goods which they needed; if they could not get such purchasing power from their agriculture they would inevitably turn to the fur trade for it, and with American traders so near at hand they would soon become formidable.

The succession of projects, therefore, sprang from a desire to establish the colony so as to satisfy the Committee, while at the same time it did not compete with the fur-trade interests of the Council; and if possible the colony should be useful to the fur trade, able to supply provisions, servants, textiles and even spirits. Even if the final purpose seemed remote the other reasons for giving a market to the colonists were valid, and Simpson tried one expedient after the other.

The attempt to provide a flock of sheep for the experimental farm revealed the dangers of such an undertaking, for the party sent to buy the sheep, outraged at the prices demanded in Missouri, travelled on a further four hundred miles, only to buy in Kentucky at much the same price as had been asked in Missouri, and with infinitely less chance of getting the sheep to Red River. What with the length of the journey (some fifteen hundred miles) the lateness of the season and the heat, the thorn and barley-grass through which the sheep had to be driven and the relentless pressure to keep on the march, the sheep died in scores and, out of 1,475 bought, only 251 reached Red River. The episode underlined the divergencies between the settlers who were invited to subscribe to such an undertaking and the fur-traders who dominated it, and caused endless recrimination. As between the apathy of the settlers who could not have set going such a project, and the recklessness of the fur-traders who drove it to ruin, there is little to choose. But it invited mockery for the Governor and his schemes, and for his chosen servants.

In all, the Company sponsored three experimental farms, known in derision as the 'three unfortunate sisters', though from the last, begun in 1838, something did indeed emerge. The earlier stocks were reinforced by some two or three hundred sheep, which, when they had been acclimatised, were sold off to the settlers. Apparently a further instance of the folly of such experimental farms, this was, in fact, a sign that they were not entirely useless, for it was precisely

the purpose they were meant to fulfil. But Red River proved to be poor pastoral country, and although by the time of the 1849 census there were over three thousand sheep there, that figure indicated no great flocks and no stable wool-industry. In fact it came to less than one sheep per head of population. The way in which the sheep were taken over by the settlers therefore shows that by 1840 the settlers were on their feet and were capable of taking over any project which looked attractive, rather than that sheep were the answer to the needs of the settlement.

Cattle went through much the same routine as sheep. The early experiments in bringing bulls and cows from England to York and then by boat to Red River had proved costly and unsatisfactory; so had attempts to cross domestic cattle with the wild buffalo. But as early as 1822 enterprising Americans had driven a herd of about three hundred American cattle to the colony and had set on foot a very promising industry—so promising that the second venture, which brought a further herd of American cattle to the colony in 1825, fell flat. But domestic cattle were one thing, vast ranges and herds which would form a major industry and would provide a cash revenue for the settlers were another.

When the great sheep-drive from Kentucky had failed Simpson turned to a Tallow Company as an alternative. This he fostered upon the basis of an agricultural co-operative, in which cattle were rated at £1, £2 or £3 or more each, according to their age, and subscriptions to the Tallow Company were paid in cattle. Simpson was afraid from the start that it might prove impossible for the cattle to winter in the open, and so it proved. Four hundred and forty head of cattle were subscribed in 1832, and the directors of the Tallow Company, inspired by a 'lucid speech' from the Governor, hoped to prosper and build their herd to any numbers—certainly to a thousand head within five years. But snow in May 1833, followed by severe weather and a dearth of fodder, gave the Tallow Company an inauspicious start, and though a good summer kept the project going and the cattle were penned up at night during the winter and given better care during their second summer, the settlers lost faith and the herd was auctioned off in 1834. The nominal loss, which the Company accepted, was only £137, but it was estimated that the actual loss must have been well over £1,000. Once more, the Company had pioneered, and the settlers had shown themselves capable of taking over the worth-while elements in the scheme. It had resulted in the establishment of a useful dairy and cattle industry as an adjunct to the grain harvest, but not in the development of a major stock-

farming industry. At the 1849 census the colony boasted 6,014 horned cattle, stock was still being imported to counteract a steady decline in size and weight (probably due to a habit of calving too young), some settlers were driving stock down to St. Peter for sale, and the stock-farmers were dispersing into the plains in pursuit of hay and fodder.

Hemp, sheep and cattle, were in themselves nothing but examples of the Company's policy towards the settlement. The experimental farms epitomised the whole. The first experiment had been a heritage from Selkirk himself, put into practice by Halkett in 1822, under an experienced farmer, John Laidlaw, imported for the purpose. But the Model or Hay-field Farm proved disastrous; it brought some trained agricultural labourers to the colony but it spent on ambitious buildings money which should have gone on cattle and seed, and its failure was in marked contrast with the successes which the settlers were beginning to achieve by their own efforts. The second experimental farm was more directly a concern of the Company's. The sheep and the tallow projects were intermingled with this experiment, which was placed under the control of Chief Factor James McMillan in 1830, and was considered by Simpson and the Council as though it was a normal appointment in the Northern Department of the fur trade.

McMillan, however, was but an indifferent farmer. He remained at the farm until 1834, and during that time nothing prospered though money was lavished and the site, on the north bank of the Assiniboine about four miles from the forks of that river, was admirable. Simpson hoped to improve the quality of the butter, pork and beef, which were supplied to the Company, and he regarded the Farm as essential for the improvement of sheep farming. The famous stallion Fireaway, a splendid bright bay hackney, was imported from England, and mares were also driven up from the United States to improve upon the Indian horses which were all that the colony boasted hitherto. But though the breed of horses was certainly improved, 'want of system ruined all'. McMillan went back to the fur trade in 1834 and the Experimental Farm was sold off in 1836. The Company accepted a nominal loss of some £3,500, but the common conjecture was, once more, that the real loss was very much greater.

Simpson, however, as even his detractors admitted, was determined to set the colony on its feet. In 1837 he ordered more ewes and rams, to cross with the Red River stock, and in the following year another Experimental Farm was set up. This time Captain

George Marcus Cary came from England, with a party of twenty men and women, to set the experiment going. But they were all ignorant of conditions in Red River, and confusion overthrew the benefits which profusion might have bestowed. Some butter, poultry, pork and wool, was produced, but in these things the experimental farm only took from the settlers the market with the Company which they had previously enjoyed. In the ordinary routine of farming, especially in grain, the settlers by 1840 were ahead of the model farmers.

The colony, strengthened by the Scots' love of the soil and enriched by the fertility of the soil itself, was on its feet. Simpson's experiments, and his determination to find a market which would give purchasing power to the settlers, had benefited the colony obliquely rather than directly; but by 1843 he was able to report that the colony was flourishing. The crops looked well, black cattle and sheep were as numerous as winter fodder allowed, and though there were still complaints of the lack of a market Simpson said he had never seen a peasantry anywhere so comfortable and so independent in their circumstances. In the same vein he wrote that nowhere was industry 'more independent of the accidents of fortune' or idleness 'less likely to lead to want or to prompt to dishonesty'. There was a considerable traffic with St. Peter, importing horses and taking horned cattle, and one enterprising American proposed to trade in tobacco, shot and ammunition—a proposal which Simpson saw no reason to dread since the route from York was as good as that from St. Peter. The Company could meet competition with confidence. Such trade would in any case be difficult to suppress, and the only practicable course was to undersell the Americans and to make the retail traders realise how dependent on the Company they still were.

This could easily be done by refusing such retail traders the privilege of freighting out goods from England in the Company's ships, and the situation created by the policy which Simpson now followed revealed the extent to which settlement and retail trade had become established features by the 1840's. As the colonists became firmly established and able to take over from the experimental farms such elements as made a genuine contribution (in the same way as Robert Logan took over the flour-mill which the Selkirk Trustees had established, and was imitated by several other prosperous settlers), the fur-traders tried to deal with the colony more and more upon a cash basis. By 1832 credit at the Company's store—the new Fort Garry then being rebuilt—was discontinued and the amount

of freight for the colony was cut. The new system encouraged the retail traders, the wealthier men who could pay cash at Fort Garry naturally stepping into the vacancy thus created, and it also fitted in well with the situation of the *métis* and with the Company's policy for meeting American opposition.

The *métis* were in fact the only part of the colony who enjoyed a substantial cash-market for their produce. Descendants of French *voyageurs* and Indian women, they disliked steady agricultural labour even after they had ceased to roam and had settled in the colony. 'Divide while anything remains, and beg when all is done' was said to be their way of life, and their efforts at husbandry had always been feckless and destructive of the soil, and had been supplemented by organised and regular buffalo hunting. Early recognising the difficulties of achieving reconciliation between the half-breeds, the settlers, and the Company, Simpson had shown real statesmanship in securing the loyalty of Cuthbert Grant for the Company. Convinced that Grant was a manly, spirited, sensible fellow who had been led astray by the Northwesters, he got the colourful half-breed accepted into the Company's service and then, when the life of a fur-trader had proved unattractive, created for him the post of Warden of the Plains in 1828. As Warden, Grant received a salary of £200 a year and his duties were set out as 'the prevention of illicit Trade in Furs within that District under the direction of Chief Factor McKenzie'. He was expected also to encourage the half-breeds to settle on the Whitehorse Plains, and year by year he was appointed leader of the buffalo hunts by the other half-breeds.

Grant had some means of his own, though he lost a considerable sum in the failure of McGillivrays, Thain and Company. He built a most expensive water-mill, and he farmed extensively. But like the rest of his race he set off at least twice each year on an extensive hunt in which almost all the half-breeds were involved, often to the number of fifteen or sixteen hundred souls and perhaps as many as twelve hundred carts. Strict and fair discipline was maintained on the march and in camp under ten elected Captains, whose Chief or Guide controlled the camps, the march, and the hunt itself as the half-breeds moved out to Pembina, the great rendezvous at which the organisation of the hunt was set up, and then wandered in search of the buffalo herds.

Contact with the buffalo resulted in a wasteful slaughter, exhilarating while it lasted but destined to exterminate the buffalo and to leave the *métis* as insecure as ever. As many as four hundred riders might well assemble when the buffalo were sighted, to move off

towards the herd when the Captain gave the signal. First at a slow trot, then at a gallop and finally at a charge, the expert horsemen bore down on their prey, and when the buffalo had been stampeded they rode in among them firing at the gallop, and if a horse and rider were both of top rank, killing as many as ten or twelve animals at one 'race'. Well over a thousand buffalo might be killed in a single 'race', and the better the hunt the more certain was it that much of the meat would be squandered. For it could not be skinned and got back to camp before nightfall, and the dangers of Sioux attacks, forced the women and children to leave much of it to the wolves. The tongues were always secured and were rightly reckoned a delicacy, but about two-thirds of the meat was wasted as the hunt wandered from one slaughter to another.

Part of the waste during the hunts was due to the fact that the *métis* were so ill-equipped. Their pride was in their horses and in the skill with which they used them. Knives, axes, even kettles in which to render down the tallow, were in short supply; yet in the pemmican which they produced the *métis* had the one certain cash-spinner which the colony possessed. For the Company remained dependent on pemmican for its brigades as they travelled, and although in some years (as for example in 1832) prices were dropped and all the pemmican was not taken up, yet as the settlers and the English half-breeds brought their farms into production and the Company tried to get the colony's trade on to a cash basis, the pemmican from the buffalo hunts furnished most of the cash. 'Money circulates in greater quantity and more rapidly than ever: it is all—(except what comes from the C[hurch] M[issionary] Society and Catholic Church)—derived, in one shape or other, from the Fur Trade,—and its facility of attainment by the indolent race of which the great mass of the population is composed, renders it next to impossible to rouse them into energy.' The Governor's young cousin, Thomas Simpson, writing thus in 1833, was following the same line of thought as his distinguished relative, pondering the problems of a change to cash. The *métis*, it is true, disbursed the cash which they got so easily with a generosity which spread the boon throughout the colony. Indeed, many of them were only able to equip themselves for the hunt by borrowing and buying on credit, and on their return from the great spring hunts they often found their gains so quickly absorbed in satisfying creditors that they had once more to borrow in order to equip themselves for a second hunt in the autumn, from which they hoped to get meat not so much for sale as for sustenance during the winter.

Deeply concerned to keep peace within the colony and to maintain its economic stability, the Company was liable to yield to the *métis*, buying more pemmican than was absolutely necessary, rather than provoke a clear defiance. Cuthbert Grant kept his countrymen in good order, his successors followed suit, and for the most part the *métis* sought their credit from retail traders, and spent their money with them, rather than with the Company. The insistence upon a cash trade at Fort Garry accorded ill with the *métis*' way of life, and the retail trader therefore took up the function which was properly his, absorbed the cash and re-deployed it in saving and in capital works as well as in getting the consumption goods which the colony required.

At this point the Company ran into difficulty. Neither Committee nor Council had, by the early 1840's, accepted the conclusion that settlement and agriculture must inevitably spread outwards from Red River, and that the end of the régime of the fur trade was therefore in sight. There were those who tried to rationalise the Company's position by arguing that as agriculture replaced the fur trade 'Their business is said to be a losing game, and the Company, it is rumoured, are anxious to get it off their hands. Civilization at length dawns far and wide throughout Rupert's Land. The plough is at work in almost every valley, and the missionary threads almost every wild. The door, as it were, stands open; the time has come for the full tide of emigration to pour in; and we hope the day is not far distant, when the British Government will say to the Hudson's Bay Company, "Relinquish your chartered rights, not without their just value, indeed, and we will take the country to ourselves". This is what the Company is looking for'.

But this was not what the Company was looking for in 1840. A colony had much to be said for it; it was in some sense a heritage from Selkirk to which the Company was morally committed, the titles were good in law, the advantages to retiring officers and to the trade in general were strong, and the colony was in actual existence. Policy was directed to making that existence secure and trouble-free. But colonisation, as distinct from the particular colony, was neither accepted nor acceptable. Even at Red River Simpson was trying to reconcile settlement and the Company's position. Elsewhere, he saw the dangers more clearly. When the *métis* of Swan River had been humbled by the redoubtable John Clarke, and their claims to trade as natives of the soil had been utterly rejected, Simpson was ready to treat them as a 'poor indolent cowardly worthless race' and to encourage them and some of the Indians to

turn to agriculture, for which the soil of the lower Swan River valley was suitable. But the small independent settlement which had been started at Swan River in 1832 provoked him; it should be broken up and the settlers removed to Red River. Otherwise they would have no market for their surplus produce and would turn to the Americans at Pembina. Moreover, if the settlement flourished the Company's right to the soil would quite inevitably be challenged. In the same vein an infant agricultural colony which was started in 1841 on Kaministiquia River was forced to close down and migrate to the vicinity of Sault Ste. Marie. The machinery which was used to effect this was simply a refusal to employ the settlers in the fishing season or to supply them with agricultural or other implements or credit.

Simpson was afraid that such settlers, scattered and uncontrolled, would supplement their incomes by fur-trading, would act as runners and interpreters, and would provide food and transport, for American and other rivals in the trade. So, for example, he encouraged migration of the freemen and half-breeds who were settling in considerable numbers on the Saskatchewan, and gladly helped to get them settled at Red River. Even so he was anxious not to allow too many Indians to make such a move, for he thought an agricultural settlement which was dominated by Indians might well raise awkward problems. Colonisation was, therefore, to be localised and organised; settlement needed support from the Company, and there could be no question as to the policy which ought to be pursued.

The retail trader was necessary for the Company's policy in turning trade on to a cash basis, and he was equally necessary in confining settlement. Settlement, anywhere, needed some supplement to grain and cattle, and the retail trader was therefore essential if the Company refused to support the settlers. He was also essential if the Company intended to get the furs which the half-breeds and freemen would otherwise take to the Americans. On their great hunts the *métis* wandered at will over the American frontier, and traded for spirits and other goods; and both for these special occasions and for the more general problem of absorbing the petty trade in furs the Company stood by its policy of supplying goods to the retail trader, of giving him a generous price for the furs which he got, and of leaving him to face the Americans. It was as this policy developed on the basis of an established and reasonably prosperous colony that the Company ran into serious trouble.

The nearness of the American frontier to Red River had proved a great attraction to American traders; seventeen American posts

were listed in the upper Mississippi country as early as 1826, representing the interests of the American Fur Company, the Columbia Fur Company and the Cheyenne American Fur Company. In 1834 the posts of the American Fur Company were re-organised by the arrival of Henry Sibley as a partner in the concern, while the machinations of Astor (who retired from the fur trade in that year) had given to the American Fur Company a virtual monopoly. In particular Astor had absorbed the Columbia Fur Company, and he handed his powerful concern over to be re-organised by Ramsay Crooks as President. Under this management the American trade reached its zenith, alongside the expansion of the official American frontier to include Minnesota Territory. A delegation of Sioux chiefs was in 1837 taken to Washington to negotiate the cession of lands east of the Mississippi. The move was dictated by a desire to open up the pine forests to a lumber industry, an industry destined to end the prosperity of the fur-traders. But before this end was accomplished the American fur-traders had some years of prosperity ahead of them, years which saw them become even more threatening rivals to the Hudson's Bay Company. Under Norman W. Kittson, the 'Yankee Trader', as manager in northern Minnesota, Joseph Rolette, manager of the American Fur Company's post at Pembina, gave a new impetus to trade with the half-breeds, and in 1843 he began the 'Cartline' to fetch American goods from St. Paul to Pembina. Within ten years almost two hundred Red River carts were regularly engaged in the five- or six-weeks' journey on the 'Cartline', the annual value of the furs carried to the States had risen to about twenty thousand dollars, the American Fur Company established its headquarters at St. Paul in 1849, and several other companies rose to share in the promising trade.

With the American Fur Company itself Simpson had long concluded an amicable agreement. The move had come from the American partner Aikin, who in 1831 offered to withdraw the American post from Pembina (where it had been established in 1829). His condition was that the Hudson's Bay Company should, in return, agree not to trade with Indians who inhabited and made their hunts in the Rainy Lake District within the American lines, and Simpson refused the offer because many furs in that district came from the American side of the frontier and the Indians brought them to the Company since they got a better price for them. He did not allow the Company's servants to cross the line, but by outfitting the petty trader Nolin he indirectly outbid the Americans, who had to bring their goods overland from Prairie du Chien or

from Michilimackinac, and he was also reasonably certain that even if the American Fur Company withdrew from Pembina other Americans would continue the opposition. He knew that the American trade at Pembina was of little value in itself; they might withdraw although he had refused their bargain. The danger lay less in the loss of trade and more in the chance that settlers and half-breeds would become guides and canoemen and would assert their independence of the Company. But the American Fur Company sent in a new outfit in 1832 and even set up an outpost near Pembina Mountains; the main post was just south of the boundary line but the outpost was believed to be north of it.

This was a grave discouragement, and though the American Fur Company withdrew from Rainy Lake in that year, two of its partners took up the opposition. One of them was indeed a confirmed drunkard, and their failure seemed inevitable; but in the meantime they attracted the Indians by every trick known to the trade and, being British subjects, they were able to treat the boundary with complete disrespect. At the same time American opposition along the whole line of the boundary took on a more enterprising and active spirit, especially as the frontier stretched out to the west. From the Saskatchewan District Indian rumour told of an American plan to set up a post at the head of Yellowstone River, divided only by a strip of land from Bow River and therefore a threat to the trade of the Saskatchewan. Simpson, with his experience of the poor returns from Bow River, thought the trade there would not support an establishment. But much of the trade of the Saskatchewan came from south of the frontier, and the Piegiens and other Blackfoot Indians (the Bloods and the Blackfeet) were restless, unreliable, and apt to trade without loyalty to either side and to plunder and despoil both.

Simpson's régime had started with a difficult incident in which a party of Blood Indians plundered an American expedition on the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers and took the furs to Edmonton. There John Rowand, though careful not to incite the Indians against his rivals, had little choice but to trade the captured skins, though he kept them carefully marked and separate. The trade of the Saskatchewan continued along these lines, Piegiens dominating Bow River, the Bloods the Red Deer River and the Blackfeet proper the Battle River south of Edmonton. Much of the trade of Edmonton was due to Rowand's 'very superior management', and Simpson looked on it as 'without exception the most troublesome post in the Indian country'. The Plains Indians were in any case largely independent of the Company, with the buffalo herds to sustain

them. They required most careful handling, and American opposition evoked a notable battle of wits.

Rowand in 1831 sent out a colourful character called Jamey Jock, a half-breed son of James Bird who had become a Piegan Chief, with a generous outfit, towards the headwaters of the Missouri. This was typical Company policy, varied in that a half-breed chief was credited with an outfit whereas elsewhere a half-breed or Canadian trader was sold goods cheap and was then given attractive prices for his furs. In either case the Company carried opposition into the American territories without involving itself in a breach of treaties; and in either case it had only a hold on the trader by ties of self-interest. So the American Fur Company (as the Indians had warned) set up a post in 1832 at the Forks of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, and proved able to buy Jamey Jock and his tribe, and to divert to themselves some three or four thousand beavers, for they were very liberal with their goods. It was small comfort to say that the American post was set in the midst of warring tribes and would need such strength that profits would be impossible. The post was a serious threat to the trade of Edmonton, it forced Rowand to send an expensive party of twenty men to reclaim the Piegans to the Company, and it cut down the Company's profits also.

With petty traders, whether they were American or Canadian, Simpson and the Council knew that they could not come to terms. The only remedy was to make the trade unprofitable for them, for any arrangement would at best bind only the trader who made it. In general, the petty trader flourished where the distances were less, the great American companies where distance put a premium on capital and organisation. Lake Huron District was therefore the scene of much rivalry from the petty traders. There in 1831 Simpson thought the Company needed nine posts despite the small trade, since the Indians were 'as closely watched, I may say hunted down by the hordes of petty Adventurers who infest the District, as they themselves do the little game that remains on their lands'. The Indians were no longer a simple unsophisticated race, but crafty and vicious. Though the Company ruined several of the adventurers others sprang up, and dissatisfied former servants of the Company were among them, so that although the policy was to trade if necessary at a loss so as to protect other areas, by 1843 Simpson was still reporting Lake Huron District as over-run by petty traders who flooded the country with spirits and so picked up a large proportion of the meagre trade.

Lake Huron was the frontier to protect the posts at Timiskaming,

Abitibi and Lake Superior, from opposition; and by 1832 the poverty of those districts, which made it necessary for the opposition to haul up food from Canada, had left the Company supreme. But the Timiskaming District was so near to Canada that it was open to attack from 'every petty Dealer who has sufficient capital or credit to provide himself with a little provisions and a few trifling articles of trade', and though poor in provisions it was well up in furs. Moreover the American-based lumber firm of the brothers McConnell was liable to enter upon the fur trade as a side-line, and that would be a formidable proposition in which the high costs of provisions and of freight would be unimportant. Simpson decided to stock up Timiskaming and to sell so cheap that the Americans must trade at a loss even when they reckoned the fur-trade merely as an adjunct to lumbering. This was sound long-term commercial policy. It was adopted by the Company considered simply as an independent trading concern engaged in a contest with opposition traders. It had no basis in chartered rights, grants of exclusive trade, or even control of transportation routes—for as against the control of shipping through the Bay stood the fact that Timiskaming and the whole of the American frontier was far removed from York or Moose and that while the Americans could easily float their returns downstream in heavy *bateaux* for two or three thousand miles to St. Louis or St. Peter the Hudson's Bay men had to use canoes, or at best light boats, because of the portages which they had to make. This geographical factor worked so much in favour of the Americans that they were able to profit from a supplementary trade in buffalo robes, which proved too bulky for transport to Hudson Bay.

Simpson was therefore compelled to meet the opposition on level terms, even conceding some advantage. It was his ability to trade at a loss until he had beaten the opposition out of the field which was his main strength, and when the opposition commanded financial resources also the struggle was necessarily long. So it was twelve years or more before, in 1843-4, Simpson had driven the McConnell brothers out of the trade of Timiskaming. Then, in 1843, two of the six brothers met him and proposed terms on which they would withdraw from the fur trade and confine their attentions to lumbering. They had been beaten, and Simpson was in a position to reject their proposal that the Hudson's Bay Company should pay them £500 a year to abandon a trade which they could not pursue with profit. The stability and resources of the Company had triumphed. But twelve years' trading at a loss represent no easy victory by appeal to privilege.

When the business in Timiskaming was over, Simpson was able to place John Siveright in command there, moving him up from Fort Coulonge and the Ottawa River. There also Siveright had met opposition, and had been successful. The district had been studded with opposition posts, petty traders taking full advantage of their easy access to Montreal. There also the Company could see little hope of profit, and the petty traders crept further north each year as the lumbermen hacked into the forest and the Iroquois and Algonquins took advantage of the 'extraordinary and oppressive license' which the Governor of Canada granted them, in 1830, to hunt at will regardless of supposed tribal boundaries. Faced by roaming Indians, the easy route to Montreal, the petty traders' use of spirits, and opposition from lumbermen, the Company was well on the defensive in Ottawa River. But by 1831 Simpson was declaring that petty traders had been driven from the district, and the Company's posts made enough profit to cover their costs, by selling provisions to the lumbermen. So when in 1843 a change in the Timber Duties in the United Kingdom drove many lumbermen out of business (and also made it unprofitable for the Hudson's Bay Company to pursue that business further) Simpson was able to regard the Ottawa River trade with complacency and to transfer Siveright from Ottawa River to Timiskaming, where the opposition was still not quite beaten.

The change in command was, however, a sign that even at Timiskaming Simpson thought by 1843 that victory was within his grasp, for notwithstanding his experience in facing the opposition of the 'shanty men' at Fort Coulonge, Simpson mercilessly noted Siveright down as 'A poor well behaved little Man who is sickly Deaf and Worn out'. The comments of John McLean when he had been Siveright's subordinate (even making allowance for McLean's jealousy) fully bear out the Governor's judgment.

Simpson therefore, as his words and actions testify, thought that the petty traders and the lumbermen were beaten by 1843-4 in Ottawa River and at Timiskaming. In the King's Posts he was not so sanguine. The Company had developed its trade from Eastmain in a rivalry which led to a more active approach to the Labrador peninsula, and when the Company acquired the last ten years of Goudie's lease of the King's Posts in 1832 it still made active efforts to stimulate the trade of that region. Labrador therefore continued to absorb much attention, while the acquisition of Goudie's interest in the King's Posts brought to the Company not an end of trouble but a complicated legal dispute over a claim for old Indian debts which went with the lease; and it brought to the home government and to

the government of Canada the problem of deciding on the future of the posts. The Executive Council of the colony decided, realistically, that something like an exclusive lease was necessary to ensure that the Indians' needs were provided for, and that they were not debauched by opposition; and the home government under Russell's leadership was in 1839 prepared to grant exclusive trade and hunting on condition that the Company paid an enhanced rent and that the government had the right of entry into the area for the purpose of encouraging settlement—a condition required also by the Executive Council of the colony. For the Company the King's Posts were a vexation rather than an asset. Governor Pelly told the Colonial Office that trade there produced an annual loss, that the country was a wilderness from which nothing could be got but furs and a small quantity of salmon, and that the Company was ready to throw over the lease if it was felt that the upper Saguenay was ripe for settlement and development of a timber trade. The Company nevertheless pleaded the need to restrain the use of spirits and, maintaining that an exclusive trade was 'a means, and the only practicable means, of maintaining the peace of the Country', offered to take up the lease for a further twenty-one years after 1842. In 1841, with Sydenham approving, the Company therefore renewed the lease till 1858, at a rent of £600 a year, the Company taking responsibility for the old Indian debt and government engaging not to make any settlement within the district until 1842.

This was the background against which the indefatigable Simpson toured the King's Posts in the autumn of 1843, and reported on the situation which he found. Tadoussac, he reported, was the centre of the trade, but the whole business had been upset by developments since 1842. At least seventeen lumber companies had moved in to the Saguenay territory under licence from the Crown, and in their wake had come a flood of immigrants, many of them new to Canada, part of the flood which was pouring across the Atlantic. Simpson protested against the Governor General's licences as infringements of the agreement not to site lumber camps near enough to the Company's posts to upset the fur trade. But even Simpson felt the immigrants must be tolerated, and the Governor and Committee were forced to conclude that their lease had been carelessly drawn and that Simpson had no sound basis on which to press for revision. He, however, felt that the trade of the posts ought not to be lightly surrendered and hoped that he might secure a drop in rent as a balance for the inroads of lumberers and settlers, and when his instructions from London had forbidden him to press hard on the

colonial government, and his personal tour had revealed that over four thousand had moved into the Saguenay in the two years 1842-4, he became convinced that the lease and rent were a pure waste of money. Lumbermen, settlers, and American fishermen made it impossible to protect the trade, so the Company should give up the pretence of an exclusive licence, should terminate the lease, save the rent and come out into the market and beat competition by trading at better prices.

In these encounters with opposition, whether American or Canadian, Simpson showed himself equally ready to legislate his opponents out of trade, to drive them out, or to buy them out. It was the last course which he took with the American Fur Company, his rival in the great central bloc of his territory, from Rainy Lake to the foot of the Rockies. On the whole he was well satisfied with his technique of equipping independent traders to out-trade the Americans, and by 1831 he was reporting that in the Rainy Lake District the American Fur Company was doing less trade than it had done when it first came there nine years previously. The Americans, he said, were making a steady loss. They would gladly abandon the trade and had made an offer that both they and the Hudson's Bay Company should deny the trade in spirits—which would be the first step towards bringing the Indians to heel. The Company was even able to buy furs for cash across the counter at Fort Garry. True, prices were high and profits low, but at least the posts paid their expenses, and the damage done to the Americans was considerable—so much that many American deserters could easily have been taken into the Company's pay, and they abandoned their post at Lac la Fleche.

At the same time even Simpson could not pretend that he was getting things all his own way. The Americans set themselves up at Lake of the Woods and at White Fish Lake in 1830, and although they were attacked and robbed by the Assiniboines they were able to equip themselves from the Mandan villages, to transport their goods by horses and carts, and to set up a post within reach of Fort Pelly on Swan River. Simpson was therefore compelled to maintain his posts—especially the extravagant establishment at Fort Pelly—and to 'trade close' in unremitting opposition.

In such a position, Simpson managed to negotiate an agreement with the American Fur Company by which the Hudson's Bay Company paid its rival £300 a year for a promise not to interfere with Indians to the north or west of Lake Superior. The agreement was made in 1833 and was due to expire in 1844, when Simpson

hoped to secure a renewal; it was based on his conviction that in the Rainy Lake, Lake Superior, Lake Huron area he could rest content when he had silenced this powerful rival. In the early 1840's however, the general development around Lake Superior quite changed the situation. A rich copper vein on the west side of that lake, a chain of agricultural settlements, and the beginnings of a ship canal between Lake Huron and Lake Superior, were all signs that the whole area would soon be opened to settlement—as proved true. Against such development the alliance with the American Fur Company was of no effect. Apart from the restless settlers at Copper Harbour a powerful rival arose in the Cleveland Company—a concern whose actual operations were confined to American territory but whose post at Pigeon River and whose policy of founding a series of agricultural settlements threatened to draw many Indians away to trade south of the frontier. Fort William was particularly under threat in 1843, and the threat developed so late in the season that the American Fur Company had no chance of helping although Simpson had just managed to renew the alliance for a further two years. In fact the Cleveland Company lasted only from 1840 to 1845 and was then forced to withdraw by its losses in trade, which drove it bankrupt despite the background of military posts and frontier immigration which seemed to promise so much support to a development company.

The three-years' tussle with the Cleveland Company brought out a further point of policy. The Company's rivals came in three waves. First came the fur-traders great or small, indistinguishable in essence from itself and capable of being out-traded, outlawed or bought out. Then came the lumberers, to whom the fur trade was something of a side-issue, but who led the Indians away from fur-hunting, debauched them with little concern for future policy, and provided a market for provisions both for the Indians and for the Company's posts; they were the advance-guard of settlement and were a strong challenge to the fur trade in general as well as to the Company in particular. Third came settlement proper, and garrison posts such as the Americans had set up at Sault Ste. Marie and La Pointe. Successful settlement meant the end of the fur trade, and it meant also an immediate challenge to exclusive trade and to propriety of the soil. But though settlement meant the third and final phase of the challenge to the Company, it could not be seriously opposed; nor could missionary enthusiasm be denied. Both settlement and missionary activity could, however, be circumscribed even when the Company was ostensibly accepting and even helping them.

So, when the Cleveland Company seemed to threaten the trade of Fort William by drawing down Indians to an agricultural settlement at Pigeon River, it was considerably helped by the presence of a missionary priest on American territory, and Simpson found it necessary to counter the attraction by fostering a similar agricultural settlement for Indians on the Kaministikwia a few miles above Fort William and by securing the promise of a priest from the Bishop of Juliopolis.

But he regarded such development as a necessary evil rather than as an ideal. He did not, for example, offer that the Company should support the priest whom he asked for, nor did he reveal that he had anything in view save the welfare of the Indians. In general, he and the Company accepted the value of the missionary priest. Even though Simpson had early put on record his opinion that educated Indians were useless to themselves and to society, the Company had followed up a policy of educating Indian children ever since 1818. At Red River the clergy, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, played an important part in fostering orderly and regular conduct. Though Simpson brought his usual desire for economy to this problem (he thought that one Protestant priest who would also keep a school should replace the Chaplain, the Assistant Chaplain and a schoolmaster who could not even read a page from the Bible), he thoroughly approved the clergy and the schools which they founded. This applied alike to the public day-schools and to the private boarding-schools which sprang up, to the Missionary Society's School for Indian boys and to the School of Industry which set out to domesticate a numerous band of Indians as well as to teach the settlers' wives and daughters to spin and weave their wool and flax.

The highlanders' desire for a pastor who could speak the Gaelic was favourably looked upon; but by 1844 the Company had not accepted responsibility for Selkirk's promise that the Presbyterians should have their own minister. Simpson had, however, 'used a little bait' to start a subscription list for building a stone Protestant Church, and the Company was ready to help in the transportation of both Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy to the scenes of their labours; in 1843, for example, Simpson agreed to provide passage from Montreal to Red River for the Protestant Bishop of Montreal and his Chaplain, and for the Roman Catholic Bishop of Juliopolis with four of his priests and two nuns. All such passages were to be paid for (though the charge for the Bishop of Juliopolis was later remitted) but this was still a substantial contribution from the fur

trade to missionary effort, for the priests often entailed delays and fuss, and even extra craft.

In this matter Simpson was almost exclusively secular in his approach. It is difficult, if not quite impossible, to find in his vast correspondence any evangelising impulse, or indeed any genuine religious conviction. He regarded the mission priests as a means of localising an impulse towards settlement which it would be impolitic to forbid or to oppose. 'Every mission', he wrote, 'if successful must be considered the germ of a future village' which, unless care were taken, would be valueless to the fur trade and would entail upon the Company the costs and responsibilities of government.

The policy pursued was nevertheless such that Alexander Ross, by no means uncritical of the Company, felt justified in writing that 'the Company have thrown open one of the finest countries on the face of the earth for missionary labours; sacrificed their trade for the sake of the Gospel; and offered, in every possible way, every facility that either wealth or power could give, in order to facilitate inter-communication with the natives, and assist the pious missionary to come and go when and where he pleases for carrying on the great and benevolent work of salvation'. This was a generous tribute—especially considering Ross's strong Presbyterian feeling that a minister for the Scots settlers might well come before a confusing duplication of missions to the Indians. His conclusion was that much of this generosity to the missions was wasted, and merely provoked denominational strife, and this was a view with which Simpson would have agreed. In 1843, for example, two Jesuits from France and one from Canada began to set up a mission near Abitibi. Simpson suspected a wish to get in ahead of the Wesleyans; he felt, too, that although they told the Indians that the Company had been just, and that they must not deal with petty traders, this was no more than a 'stroke of policy' on the Jesuits' part. Yet he saw no way to prevent them and decided to make a merit of necessity by pointing out favourable sites for their missions. When the Jesuits abandoned their permanent mission and decided to visit Abitibi only during the summer for a few weeks, Simpson encouraged them to do so (the Indians would at that season be settled and fishing instead of hunting) and agreed that the Company would build them a small chapel.

In the same year (1844) Simpson reminded the London Committee that they had agreed to put four or five Wesleyan missionaries on the same footing as commissioned gentlemen as regards maintenance and accommodation, and that they had agreed to provide conveyance to the mission posts and to build churches and schools.

This was an embarrassing and invidious arrangement, which should be commuted for a cash payment, and no new missions should be sent out from home until the pioneers had proved themselves. He returned to this proposal in the following year, by which time two Wesleyan missions were established in the Southern Department, for Simpson proved unable to resolve his differences with the leading Wesleyan, the Reverend James Evans. The latter, said Simpson, failed to understand the situation in Rupert's Land. He had declared Sunday travelling ungodly and so had been led to interfere with trade, had acted with an habitual assumption of superiority, and he proved unable to accept Simpson's arguments. This was obstinacy such as Simpson rarely met, and he suggested to the Committee that the Wesleyan Missionary Society be asked to remove Evans.

The difference went deeper than Evans' obduracy and the clash of characters, for the Wesleyan minister had put to Simpson a series of proposals for developing manufactures. These were proposals which Simpson thought both impracticable and intolerable. At best they would wean the Indians from their hunting and settle them down as agriculturists and artisans, to the destruction of the fur trade; at worst they would produce a horde of dissolute seminomadic hangers-on near the white settlements and, again, would prove disastrous for the fur trade. In any case Simpson aimed to stave off, not to encourage, a fundamental change of society, although he accepted the ultimate inevitability of the process. Where, however, the fur trade had already declined he was prepared to accept a policy of active support for the missions—as when in 1843 he found that the efficiency of Norway House as a depot and transport station was likely to be impaired by a migration of Indians to Red River Colony. Then he took even Mr. Evans into active partnership, formed the Rossville mission at Norway House as a nucleus to an agricultural settlement, and was soon congratulating himself that the Indians were becoming agriculturists and were producing potatoes and barley despite the poor soil and the climate.

In the wide sphere under his authority Simpson acted, in his subtle policy of facing opposition, with little effective check upon his judgment and determination. But at the crux of the problem, at Red River, where the American boundary, the missionary effort, and the presence of a difficult Indian and half-breed population all came together, Simpson found himself in a curious position, in which there seemed to lurk a possibility that his authority might be challenged.

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CHAPTER XXI

FREEDOM OF TRADE AT RED RIVER

The independence of the settlement from fur trade control was deeply affected when in 1836 Selkirk's heirs re-conveyed the colony to the Company. After the departure in succession of Captain Bulger and then Robert Pelly, the Governor of the colony had in fact been an officer of the Company—first Donald McKenzie from 1825 to 1833, then Alexander Christie until 1839. Chief Factor Duncan Finlayson had been Governor from 1839 to 1844, a sympathetic man who, though alarmed at the petty traders, 'by the energy of his rule, and by the wisdom of his policy, established order and maintained peace'. He cared for missionary enterprise and general education and left a fund of goodwill to his successor—again Alexander Christie. With such a succession of Governors drawn from the Company the re-conveyance to the Company made so little immediate difference that it was some years before the settlers realised what had happened.

But the change was important. Up to 1835 Simpson and Chief Factor Donald McKenzie had dominated the colony with a meagre Council of three to help them keep the peace. Settlers and priests were added to this Council of Assiniboia in 1835, and the spread of responsibility brought not only Bishop Provencher, but Cuthbert Grant as Warden of the Plains to speak for the half-breeds, and Andrew McDermot to speak for the independent merchants. Re-assumption by the Company of the title to the soil removed Lord Selkirk's heirs from their position of authority; they were recompensed by a grant of stock in the Company, from which they had previously been forced to borrow money for the running of the colony. At the same time Simpson's growing habit of dividing his time between Lachine, the out-stations and London, with only occasional visits to Red River, placed more responsibility on the Governor of the colony.

'All points hitherto in dispute were settled by the Governor himself, or not settled at all', wrote Alexander Ross; and a crisis became inevitable when Simpson's reluctance to live in the colony coincided with resumption of full ownership by the Company and with the economic and social stability which had been achieved. The Company attempted at the same time to place the burdens of

rule upon the settlers, while assuming its full chartered right to exclusive trade. The two were connected by a tariff of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. placed on all export and import trade to the colony in order to raise a revenue for the maintenance of law and order. A new Legislative Council was convened, and in his opening address Simpson pointed out that, with a settled population of more than five thousand, the colony had passed the stage at which personal influence could be trusted to regulate public life.

Established institutions would henceforth be necessary, and the Company was yielding to settlement when it called the first Legislative Council; the principle was in no way diminished by the predominance of Company men within the Council or by the way the Council undertook the burden of keeping the peace and of raising revenue. But the announcement of the colony's duty to manage its own affairs was a step towards assertion of the right to self-government, which led directly to dislike of the Company's predominance on the Council and ultimately to a challenge of the Company's position, chartered rights and, when it had become known that the Company had bought the Selkirk grant, its ownership of the soil.

As an immediate issue, the duties upon exports and imports were looked upon as ill-advised in themselves and as dictated by the Company men upon the Council in order to discriminate against the petty traders. The feeling took on a peculiar point when it was realised that the revenue from the taxes would be used to pay officials whose task would include enforcement of the chartered privileges, and though the duty was reduced to four per cent. on an appeal to London, it remained as a sign of the subservience of the colony to the Company and as a challenge to the aspirations of the settlers. The petty traders felt all the more disgruntled because this was just the period at which the policy of turning over the retail trade of the colony to independent traders was first beginning to assume practical importance.

It says much for the common-sense of all parties, and for the adroitness with which Simpson played his hand, that serious difficulties were avoided. As late as 1844 he reported that the colony was in a healthy state, with few crimes and no cases involving 'more atrocious offences'. The chief cause of dissatisfaction was that the settlers were being issued with title-deeds to their lands in which they were saddled with the duty of defending not only the colony but the whole of the Company's territories. Simpson, with a show of sweet reasonableness, ordered the title-deeds to be modified. Yet

a substantial volume of private trade developed, and in its way the Company encouraged the growth, for this was the chosen method for combating the Americans and it was the best means of placing responsibility for supplying the needs of the settlers upon private shoulders.

But much of the petty traders' business involved an evasion of the customs duties, when they got supplies from south of the border; and some of it involved a defiance of the Company when (as was often suspected) they traded skins to the Americans. True, in their way they were the outposts of the Company's trade, and they found the Company willing to act as their agent for buying goods in England, transferring balances to England, and freighting goods up from York. In their turn they operated their own boats from York to the colony and on many occasions acted as hired freighters for the Company. Such mutual dependence of Company and traders solved many difficulties, but the underlying clash remained. Freedom to trade, and self-government, could not be reconciled with exclusive trade and proprietary rights; especially when, although the American Fur Company was happy to arrange a compact with the Hudson's Bay Company in most other districts, Simpson's overture for a similar arrangement for Pembina and the frontier south of Red River had been declined. The trade of Pembina received a great stimulus from Kittson's knowledge and personality, and from the organisation of the transport-route by cart-line from Mendota to Pembina. The possibility of an arrangement was further removed when, also in 1843, the American Fur Company was re-organised by Pierre Chouteau Junior and Company, and Kittson's success led to other Americans spreading the trade to St. Paul and St. Peter.

Pembina, a bare couple of miles south of the frontier and with easy access to north, to south, east and west, was the greatest centre of illicit trade in furs taken north of the frontier, the easiest source for goods to be sold in the Red River stores or to be flaunted by the Indians and half-breeds. The threat was such that Kittson certainly hoped he might be able to make a deal with the Company and retire with a price, and Simpson might well have accepted the opening had the private traders not responded to Kittson's trade with such enthusiasm that Simpson decided that they must be suppressed. Cuthbert Grant proved able to keep the *métis* within bounds, and in the settlement itself a steady policy of inspection was enforced. But neither the Company nor Kittson was in a position to trade hard. So the independent traders flourished, and consequently increased in numbers and importance.

Kittson, his overtures spurned, was giving an immensity of trouble; and the long-term danger was not that the American would make a profit for a few years but that he would supply the independent traders with goods which they, in their turn, would supply to the *métis* who would seek out the Indians and get all the best and lightest furs from them.

The danger looked worse because of the characters of the two leaders of the independent traders. Andrew McDermot, the mercurial but determined Irishman who won the admiration of Alexander Ross, had risen to the head of the colony. Reputed to be the wealthiest man there, he was unlikely to renounce such a trade as Kittson offered; and the half-breed James Sinclair was also too experienced and ambitious to accept a veto from the Company. Both were prosperous. They had acted as freighters, independent traders and guides, on behalf of the Company, and they were full of plans in which the development of settler-responsibility and the decline of Company-authority were inevitable features. A proposal to start a distillery as a means of absorbing surplus grain brought them to the front of the settlers, and the gathering opposition can be sensed when Simpson coupled this proposal (which was refused) with a move to cut down the police of the colony as part of a 'disposition on the part of these ignorant people to legislate for themselves'. He recognised that prosperity was making the settlers independent, but thought that as long as their numbers did not increase they could still be kept in hand for many years by adroit management.

Disappointed in their distillery proposals, they were again thwarted when Simpson decided that the experiment of encouraging McDermot to trade furs on the American side of the frontier should not be repeated since he had merely drawn Indians from Red River by the high prices which he gave. In 1844, also, the freighting contract of McDermot and Sinclair was not renewed and a consignment of tallow which the Company was to have taken to England for them was not loaded on the ground that there was no room in the ships. Simpson's intention, expressed in his letters and obvious from his actions, was to bring the independent traders to heel.

Chief Factor Alexander Christie, replacing the easy-going Duncan Finlayson as Governor of Assiniboia in 1844, supported Simpson in this matter. He over-rode objections by refusing to open the accounts, and followed this up by a proclamation which stated that the Company would not henceforth ship any goods for England unless the owner had signed a declaration that he had not traded in

furs; and if subsequently he so traded then the Company reserved the right to detain his imports from England for a year, or to buy them at their cost-price. Letters also would only be carried by the Company if the envelope bore the sender's name, so that if he were suspected of trading in furs his mail could be stopped. McDermot and Sinclair sought their remedy in deliberate and ostentatious purchase of goods from Kittson and even from St. Peter itself, and others followed their lead.

At the end of 1844 the Red River settlers were no longer completely dependent upon Hudson's Bay for their supplies. With an alternative source of supply available they were free of the Company's economic tutelage, and therefore ready to challenge its legal authority. They could get the goods to trade with Indians, and they had a market for any furs they might acquire. They had behind them, too, a feeling that they were challenging a restrictive corporation in such a way as to vindicate the freedom of the settlers, as was shown by a number of petitions sent by the *métis* to ask permission to become American citizens.

As the issue shifted from the fact of economic dependence to the theory of legal subordination Christie turned for advice to the Recorder of Assiniboia, Adam Thom. He could hardly have turned to a worse source, for though Thom's knowledge and his courage were equally beyond question he was too legalistic and cold for a situation which demanded tact and human understanding; and anything which he said or did would inevitably lose effect because the French in the settlement were convinced that he was hostile to them. For Adam Thom was the author of a series of 'Anti-Gallic Letters' which had denounced the doctrine of French nationality and had done much to bring on the rebellion of 1837. So a problem which could only have been solved by mutual confidence was subjected to mistrust and legalistic coercion. Thom, however, had enough sense to advise against a seizure of the goods of men who were known to have traded illegally, and when McDermot and Sinclair refused to declare that they had not traded in furs the action against them was only indirect. The Council of Assiniboia put a duty of twenty per cent. on goods imported through York for independent traders, leaving Christie with power to exempt those who made a declaration against trading in furs; and the Council further took steps to cut imports of goods from St. Paul to amounts which would be inadequate as a stock for the Indian trade. Duties were to be levied on goods from America if they exceeded £10 local value; or if the settler himself accompanied the goods and declared they were only

for himself or for sale to settlers they might be allowed free of duty up to £50. Something of a moral sanction was given to this effort to prevent opposition when these enactments were accompanied by a renewed veto on the sale of spirits to Indians.

McDermot and Sinclair refused to pay duties on their imports from America on the ground that they were not regular traders but had only gone to America to supply their own wants. It was a specious, and obviously untrue, answer; and when the Council of Assiniboia insisted all the traders, including even McDermot and Sinclair, gave in. The tallow which lay at York, and the furs which had been traded, remained to be settled, and here the affair was marked by a curious mixture of conciliation and of truculence on both sides. McDermot sold his tallow and his furs to the Company; but Sinclair refused, in order to vindicate his right to trade. It seemed that Sinclair's ambition was to stand forth as champion of the *métis* and of their claim to freedom of trade. He must be beaten in the open. So the Company refused to come to terms with either McDermot or Sinclair. Both offered to give bail of £2,000 that they would hold off from the fur trade, on condition that the Company should buy their lands, houses, and merchandise at a fair valuation and should then let the houses to them. But they declared their right to trade in furs, and McDermot told the Company that 'it is against my will, to be obliged to give my furs to the Americans, but I must do so when you refuse them'.

Adam Thom at this time gave a twist of the screw when he revised the form of land-deed under which the settlers held from the Company and inserted clauses which made tenure and sub-tenure conditional upon observance of the Company's control of trade. This was a shrewd enough move, but it left the Company with the problem of taking action against those who simply ignored the whole procedure and squatted on land without any land-deed at all. The legalism lost its point when the *métis* asked Christie to define their rights and status and he, while denying that they had any rights to the soil as being native-born, admitted that any purchaser of land would have the right to trade in furs if he had not deprived himself of it by accepting a restriction.

Simpson arrived at Red River in June 1845. He approved of Christie's actions, he took part in the deliberations regulating customs payments, and he supported Christie in an attempt to prevent payment for American goods in bills drawn upon the Company or in notes issued by the Company. This move failed, for the Americans were prepared to accept the Company's paper, and

the independent traders had an adequate supply. Christie and Thom, therefore, with Simpson behind them, merely appeared ineffectively repressive; the trade continued despite their restrictions, and so much did McDermot and Sinclair, and the doctrine of freedom of trade, appear entirely reasonable that they appealed to the Committee in London and even secured from them a veto on the proclamation against trading and on the censorship of mail.

The dispute came to a head in August 1845, and the local friction (for it was little more) over the Company's powers and the settlers' rights took on the character of an international incident. The weakness of the Company's position lay in the American capacity to trade; its strength, from one point of view, lay in the fact that it was perpetuating British rule over fertile territory which was likely to secede to the United States. This, however, was a position in which it received little support from a British government more concerned with its own disputes over corn laws and navigation acts than with defence of the frontiers of empire. The frontier of Canada with the United States was, in any case, a frontier which even the Duke of Wellington had declared indefensible; and British politicians, especially the Radical opposition, saw in the military liabilities of Canada a magnificent example of the folly and cost of imperial commitments. Yet at this juncture the Company secured military support against the Americans, and that in such a form as to bolster its authority against the independent traders.

The surge of the American frontiersmen into the prairies, over the Rockies and into the Pacific Slope, had roused the apprehensions of the British government. Simpson travelled to Red River with the two young army officers, Lieutenants H. J. Warre and M. Vavasour, who had been sent out in 1845 with the duty of reporting on the defence of the frontier. His knowledge and his power were quite unrivalled, and he clearly enjoyed the bravado of planning military measures in the same way as, twenty years earlier, he had enjoyed writing of his determination to sell his life dear to the Northwesters. He took stock of the Company's two forts. Upper Fort Garry at the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, with its fifteen-foot stone walls and corner bastions, contained a quadrangle 240 feet by 250 and would hold a hundred men; Lower Fort Garry, which Simpson had begun to build in 1831, about twenty miles lower down, was still not quite finished in 1845, but Simpson reckoned it could hold four or five hundred men within its fourteen-foot walls. He underlined the existence of a string of American forts from Sault Ste. Marie across to the Yellowstone, and the rumours that an American

garrison was to be established at Pembina. He knew already that the American post at Yellowstone River was under new and vigorous management, and he advised Warre and Vavasour to consider a similar string of posts across the continent from Sault Ste. Marie to Red River, where a strong garrison might be maintained in the forts. A further garrison, he thought, might be kept at Cape Disappointment in Oregon.

At the same time Simpson was advocating enforcement of the prohibitory customs duty at York and a veto on the Company's provision of transport or remittance facilities in the hope that such action would close down the independent traders. He knew the chance was that opposition might become more bitter; but he thought the settlement was in an unsatisfactory state, mainly because of the private traders, and wrote that 'nothing but a military force can, in my opinion, permanently reconcile the enforcing of our rights, with the preserving of the public tranquility'.

This meant that Simpson accepted the conclusion that if the Company enforced its claims riot would ensue. He thought two hundred troops would be necessary on this account. At this stage events played into his hands, for in August reports came in that the *métis* on their hunt had met a force of 190 American cavalry under a Captain Sumner. The meeting took place south of the frontier, on American territory, and Captain Sumner warned the *métis* that they were trespassing; they must hunt only on Canadian territory unless they moved to Pembina, became American citizens, and so won the right to hunt (and to trade furs) south of the line. The incident appeared designed to force the *métis* to make a choice, and though the ostensible purpose of the American expedition was to capture some Sioux Indians accused of the murder of American missionaries, Simpson proclaimed that their purpose was to entice the *métis* to settle at Pembina on American soil. With Sinclair, McDermot and John McLaughlin (a nephew of McDermot's), stirring up strife in the settlement, he was able to tie in the cavalry incident with the struggle for free trade, for McLaughlin had got up a petition with over 1,250 signatures on it, asking for an American post at Pembina.

So Simpson was able to communicate the incident to Lord Metcalfe as Governor-General in terms which knit together the military danger from America, the unrest in the settlement, and the Company's privileges and veto on trade in furs. 'The Peace of the Settlement and the exclusive rights of the Company are in grave danger', he wrote in November 1845, arguing that a military establishment would win over the Indians, calm the *métis*, and give a guerilla force

for general use. The free-traders were quite certainly negotiating for the establishment of fur-trade posts 'upon the lines' by Pierre Chouteau Junior and Company of New York, who had succeeded to the American Fur Company, and Simpson also knew that they were the agitators who had organised the petition asking for American citizenship.

This was a period in which the number and diversity of the problems at issue all combined to strengthen the Company's case for government intervention. In the first place there can be no doubt that the British government was strongly influenced by a feeling of responsibility towards the full-blooded Indians. Arguments based upon the harmful effects of competitive trade, the inevitable recourse to trade in spirituous liquors and the debauching of the Indians, had secured a renewal of the Company's privileges as recently as 1839. 'The native population of the countries thro' which the Hudson's Bay Company's business extends, never derived any real benefit from their intercourse with the Whites', said the Company, 'until the Fur-trade became exercised under the existing License'. The same feelings were evident in 1844-5 when a Commission on Indian affairs had quoted with approval the Company's first instructions, of 1670, for just treatment of the Indians. The half-breeds also came into the reasoning, and it was argued that a quarrel between the Sioux and the half-breeds which had flared up in the Pembina area would probably make the *métis* idle, and open to sedition, in the summer.

But though these reasons might have led government to declare in favour of the Company in 1845, they would almost certainly not have resulted in armed support but for the American question. McDermot and Sinclair, determined to trade in furs, brought all the issues together, for they defied the Company's Licence of Exclusive Trade, they encouraged traders from the United States (and on both counts were liable to bring competition and liquor to the Indians), and they were obviously involved in an attempt to stir up the *métis*.

These things all added up to a sound enough case upon the comparatively small issue of a vindication of the Company's Licence. It is difficult indeed to envisage such things mounting to the scale of an international incident which could only be settled by the threat of military force; and it is equally difficult to imagine that the military force which was in fact sent to Red River at this juncture could possibly have been regarded as an effective threat by the British government—still less by the Americans, whose vivid memories of

the War of Independence quite outshone the red-coat achievements during the War of 1812. Nevertheless the whole official correspondence breathes an air of military bravado which cannot be overlooked. Simpson set the tone, suggesting that a garrison at Red River would maintain British influence as far afield as the distant and disputed Oregon territory. But Simpson's suggestions were endorsed by Lord Metcalfe as Governor-General, and were passed on to the home government by Metcalfe's successor, Lord Cathcart.

In December 1845, on receiving a copy of the President's Message to Congress, Simpson put to Cathcart a strong statement of the danger and asked for a garrison at Red River, and on instructions from Lord Stanley at the Colonial Office Cathcart offered a force of two hundred men. The costs of colonial garrisons, and the greater costs of colonial wars, were however a serious issue in English politics at that time, and Cathcart stipulated that the Company should pay a bounty to such troops and should provide transport for them onwards from Sault Ste. Marie. Simpson eagerly began to organise canoes for the purpose, but Cathcart's offer had been a tentative suggestion for discussion, trying to work out some arrangement similar to that of the East India Company (with their *Batta* for whose pay and maintenance that Company was responsible) rather than a firm commitment. Simpson indeed tried to seize the opportunity given by the President's message, but the Governor-General was not to be committed. He referred the important decision to London, insisted that the Governor of the Company must settle the terms with Lord Stanley, and suggested that the Company would have to underwrite part of the cost.

Simpson had for the moment failed with the Governor-General, but he had a unique knowledge of the North American Continent. It would have been folly to have overlooked him, however prejudiced on some matters he might seem; and in 1844 the problems of the American frontier were such that Simpson's advice was not only accepted but was actively sought. President J. K. Polk had brought the Democratic party to power with a mandate to uphold the western migration of the American people and the integration of the new states so formed into the United States. This was the 'manifest destiny' of the American people, a policy for carving the new state of Texas by annexation from Mexico, and for creating a state of Oregon by defining the Columbia frontier with Great Britain.

For over twenty years, since it succeeded to the inheritance of the North West Company on the Pacific Slope, the Hudson's Bay

Company had been constantly at the government's elbow, warning of American designs and of British claims in the Columbia region, and since 1838 the warnings had become more urgent and pointed—a warning of an American bill to take over Oregon by military force and to build a fort there, a report of a resolution in the Senate for declaring America's right to Oregon, and the enrolment of a volunteer military force. The British government had reached a stage at which it not only sent out Warre and Vavasour to report on the defence of the frontier, it also sent out a surveyor, Mr. A. Wells, to be Commissioner to survey the frontier, and it eagerly accepted the advice and information which he had to offer. Simpson was not such a man as would hold back when important negotiations of this kind were afoot. In 1844 he drafted a letter on the Oregon boundary to the British Minister at Washington, and followed it up with the suggestion that he might deliver it in person and be at hand for consultation. He briefed Warre and Vavasour in detail on the military problems, and he pressed upon the Company and on government alike his view that a military force at Red River was necessary in the face of the American frontier problem.

It cannot be doubted that Simpson was disingenuous in this plea for a military force. 'If we succeed in getting a garrison established at Red River', he wrote, 'we shall be able to put down the illicit trade and keep the settlers in order; but nothing must be said in the country about it, until we are quite certain of it'. This came at a time when his American correspondents had already told him that the frontier problem would be settled peaceably and when he was reasonably sure Congress would reject the petition of the *métis* for American citizenship. If Simpson knew that the real purpose of any troops would be to overawe the settlers, the Duke of Wellington knew that any attempt to combat the Americans must be an expanding commitment, and that the ill-defined frontier was practically indefensible. Though Gladstone as Colonial Secretary accepted the Company's case in March 1846, the Duke as Commander-in-Chief secured delay, and he was only overcome when the Company agreed to bear a part of the cost. The difficulties inherent in getting any overseas territory to pay part of the costs of its garrison were much in the minds of the Colonial Office at this time, and the Company's offer was a shrewd one, calculated to allay one of those minor irritations which beset major policy. On 26th June, 1846, a bare three days before the government was officially notified that the Oregon boundary had been peacefully settled, the garrison for Red River sailed from Cork.

The troops chosen were such as to justify the strongest War Office condemnation, and to leave no doubt that their purpose was to maintain authority in Red River rather than to defend the frontier. The Sixth Regiment of Foot, the Royal Warwickshires, were a good enough county regiment, but they numbered only some three hundred officers and men, and small attachments of twenty-eight gunners and twelve sappers and miners did little to increase their military strength. Given adequate fortifications they would have made a sound garrison, but they could not possibly have done more, and as a frontier-defence force they were weak and immobile. They could not possibly have covered the distances involved, and when they had been landed at York Fort in August 1846 it was Simpson and the Company who had to organise their transport, in thirty boats, to Red River.

Simpson travelled in a light canoe with the commanding officer, Major (later Colonel) John ffolliot Crofton, and the long hours in close companionship were not neglected. Simpson wanted to shed the cost, as well as the responsibility, of maintaining law and order in the settlement. He knew that it was impossible for the Company's Governor-in-Chief to be constantly in residence at Red River, and he knew equally well the dangers of giving the colony a resident Governor who was merely a promoted fur-trader; 'There has long been a great objection on the part of the settlers to the Governor of Assiniboia being a member of the Fur Trade, as his interests if they do not really bias his conduct, are believed so to do, inducing a distrust in all his actions'. He had advised that the commanding officer of the troops should be made Governor of Assiniboia, and the Governor and Committee has assented. In this way the commanding officer as Governor would have to maintain law; and there was so little doubt of the legality of the Company's claims that for the time being even the opposition had been silenced. The half-breed James Sinclair had put to Governor Christie a series of fourteen questions of which the object had been to get an admission that the *métis*, as natives of the soil, had rights which were not affected by the Company's Charter. Christie, probably advised by Recorder Adam Thom, answered uncompromisingly that any rights the *métis* might have were limited by the Charter, and the legal weight of this view was enough to silence the opposition, though a devastating epidemic of measles in the early summer of 1846 probably had as much effect as Thom's legalism—for at one period there were seven deaths a day and the colony was dispirited and distracted.

Simpson therefore could hope that the military might be aligned

in support of the Company, and against the illicit traders and the *métis* claims. His plans, however, were not entirely successful. Crofton was not appointed Governor of the colony, though Alexander Ross says he was; yet 'the high tone of lawless defiance and internal disaffection raised by our own people against the laws and authorities of the place, were reduced to silence'. But Crofton did not wish to remain in the colony. He returned to England, and although the Company made his successor Major J. T. Griffiths, a Councillor of Assiniboia and had given Simpson a commission for him as Governor, Simpson took no action. He travelled out from England with Griffiths in 1847 and decided that Griffiths was quite unfit for the post. Chief Factor Alexander Christie was therefore continued in office as Governor.

Nevertheless the arrival of the troops at Red River was an epoch-making event. It was the first time that the Company had received any active support from the government since the ill-fated *Hampshire* had been borrowed in 1697, and lost to Iberville in the capture of York Fort. The officers and men of the 6th Regiment of Foot might indeed be a negligible military force in themselves, but they were 'highly respectable and exemplary in their conduct' and they had a deep economic effect upon the colony. They provided a market for much of the agricultural produce, and they were a source of ready money such as the retired fur-traders had formerly been.

Minor amenities, such as the founding of the Red River Library and the importation of duty-free cigars, were due to their presence, and the administration showed increased confidence and authority, while discontent subsided as the soldiers brought something of economic stability. McDermot ended his opposition, accepted £100 as damages for losses incurred by the non-shipment of his tallow, and was allowed to sell his furs. The arrival of the troops brought him prosperity; 'Go to McDermot' said Major Crofton to his men, and they found he could supply them with everything they wanted. No sooner were the troops paid than McDermot got the money, and he was reputed to have taken over £1,400 in gold in a few months. Sinclair, however, was not acceptable to Simpson and was left to continue an opposition which resulted in his taking the petitions of the colonists to the Colonial Office.

So, though the troops brought both peace and prosperity to Red River, the opposition did not entirely die out; and although the private traders profited, bad harvests and poor hunts left many of the *métis* in a poor plight. The trouble over the American frontier, too, was obviously over and a decision to withdraw the troops, taken in

1847, was put into effect in June 1848. Wellington over-rode the Company and refused even a detachment of the locally-recruited Royal Canadian Rifles. Clearly the Company was deeply aware of the beneficial effects of the troops and knew that the American dispute was little to the point. 'The protection required was not so much against the Americans as against the settlers themselves' wrote the Secretary to Simpson; and when they were forced to accept the fact that the War Office would commit no more troops, Governor and Committee reluctantly accepted a contingent of up to two hundred army pensioners from Chelsea.

There was some hope that pensioners might prove even more appropriate than soldiers had been. Their pensions would be a source of cash, and they were to settle on the land. But from the start they were a disappointment. Instead of 200 able men there landed at York only 56 men, 42 women and 57 children. The colonists saw in the pensioners merely a 'Second edition of the *de Meurons*', and though the War Office and the Colonial Office envisaged possibilities of soldier-settlement (an idea much in the air) they proved to be an uneasy addition to the colony. Their commanding officer too, Major William Caldwell, proved at best to be 'destitute of business habits and of the art to govern', and at worst 'an elderly, dull-witted giant, punctilious with respect to his own dignity and comfort, but incapable of maintaining the one or ensuring the other'. Caldwell, however, had been nominated by Earl Grey, and had been accepted by the Governor and Committee of the Company, as Governor of Assiniboia. Simpson, who had long advocated the need for a separation of government from the fur trade, was told that 'the duties of the Company's officer in charge of the Settlement will be confined to matters of trade, council and magistracy', that the Council of the Northern Department should do no more than assist the Governor of Assiniboia in every way, and that for himself 'you should take no part in their proceedings, except to give advice (if asked) as to administration and legal proceedings'.

The Company had achieved its purpose of separating colonial administration from the fur trade. In so doing it was (or so it hoped) placing upon other shoulders the burden of maintaining its undoubtedly legal rights. But it was also accepting the conclusion that where settlement was achieved the Company's paramount position could not be maintained. For the moment little effective force was required to maintain the legal position, and for the moment it proved possible to renounce responsibility for government, but yet to maintain the right of exclusive trade. The Company might

for a time have hoped to enjoy the best of both worlds. But not for long.

While the pensioners were given grants of land (twenty acres for a private, thirty for a corporal and forty for a sergeant) and were settled in Upper Fort Garry and fed by the Company, Major Caldwell was given the former experimental farm on the Assiniboine, his second-in-command Captain Christopher Foss was also given a holding on the Assiniboine, and both were made welcome at Upper Fort Garry. But Foss proved a useless creature who provided the colony with its first major scandal when he got involved with Mrs. Ballenden, wife of the Chief Factor of Red River, and Caldwell was so easy-going that he gave the impression of being under control of the Company but yet gave no such firm control as one of the Company's own Chief Factors would have given.

Caldwell had, in particular, to take up the trail of Sinclair's crusade, for Sinclair had taken to England a petition from the settlers, and though he had himself made terms with the Governor and Committee in London (and had sold to them the tallow in dispute), Alexander Isbister had appeared to thrust the problem of the Company's rights and the settlers' claims on the attention of Earl Grey and the Colonial Office. A son of a Chief Factor in the Company, born at Cumberland House, educated at Red River (where his father took a farm), and then for three years in the Company's service in Mackenzie River, Isbister had left the country at the age of nineteen or twenty to take a degree in law at Edinburgh University. But though he neglected his farm at Red River, he devoted himself to the cause of the colony with unflagging zeal and with considerable ability. Isbister's views were founded on two basic assumptions—that competition in the fur trade would not be a bad thing, and that the Company's lands should be opened for settlement. Convinced that the Company was against the formation of settlements, whether of Indians, half-breeds or Europeans, he argued that the soil at Red River (and in many other places) was admirably suited for such settlements, which should be fostered and should be annexed to Canada. The difficult and lengthy transport route between Canada and Red River could, he thought, be overcome, and his legal approach convinced him that not only was the Company obstructive in practice but its Charter was invalid at law. He wrote and published an attack on the Company, *A Few Words on the Hudson's Bay Company with a statement of the grievances of the natives and half-caste Indians, addressed to the British government through their delegates now in London*, and he took over from Sinclair

the petition of the French and the English half-breeds and presented it to the Colonial Office in 1847.

Though Earl Grey told Isbister that he did not intend a full Commission of Inquiry into the allegations against the Company, he nevertheless set to work to ascertain the facts. Grey therefore instituted enquiries from the Governor of the Company, from Lord Elgin as Governor-General of Canada, and from Caldwell as Governor of Assiniboia, while information was also sought from Colonel Crofton and Major Griffiths, who had returned to England with the 6th Regiment of Foot. Elgin, concerned immediately with Canada, replied that there were indeed complaints of the conduct of the Company, but nothing which might not have been expected, especially from those concerned with native welfare. He was in favour of the grant of exclusive trade and told Grey that 'There is too much reason to fear, that if the trade were thrown open, and the Indians left to the mercy of the adventurers who might chance to engage in it, their [the Indians'] condition would be greatly deteriorated'. The Governor-General, emerging triumphant in Canada, carried great weight in 1849, and he was fully supported in his view (as was to be expected) by Governor Pelly, who vigorously rebutted the charges, especially the charge that the Company debauched the Indians with spirits, in rebuttal of which he quoted figures to show that the total imports (at 4,396½ gallons a year) would only provide the Company's own employees with two tablespoonfuls a day, that the troops and pensioners took their rations from this quantity and that therefore there could not be enough left to debauch the Indians. Caldwell also reported in favour of the Company, praising their fostering care for the colony, their conciliatory manner and their desire to keep prices low.

Crofton and Griffiths, too, answered that the Company was even paternalistic in its treatment of the Indians, the half-breeds and the settlers, and the Colonial Secretary was satisfied that there was no need for a government enquiry. But opposition was still not silenced, for in the meantime John McLaughlin had come to England and had threatened publication of an article on the Company. He was silenced by a writ for libel though the Company actually lost the case on a legal technicality, but he kept the question rumbling with letters to Earl Grey in which he denied the evidence of the officials whom Grey had consulted. At the same time Isbister challenged the Charter itself, and when Grey said that the Charter had been recognised by Acts of Parliament and was certainly valid, Isbister, supported by considerable humanitarian feeling, got from the House of

Commons an address to the Crown asking for an enquiry. The papers were ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, but when the Company had put in a justification of its legal position the Law Officers of the Crown gave their opinion that the rights which the Company claimed properly belonged to them. This opinion could only be upset by a test-case to challenge the Company's claim, and Isbister declined to be responsible for such a case, which would certainly have been expensive. At the same time, and probably for the same reasons, Isbister agreed that the Parliamentary enquiry should be dropped.

With New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, India and the West Indies all posing similar problems, and with Earl Grey as an active Colonial Secretary, it could not be expected that this would be the end to the disputes over Red River. For the moment the opposition in London was silenced, but the Company could not accept this as even an interim solution, for in Red River itself the dispute continued unabated. Chief Factor Ballenden, suffering from a paralytic stroke, was an amicable representative of the Company, but ineffective even before his wife got involved with Captain Foss, and Major Caldwell and his pensioners roused suspicion and some ridicule. Caldwell suspended Foss from duty and then set to work to collect information in answer to the Colonial Office questions in a way which caused even more ill-feeling than the forthright partisanship of a Company officer would have done. He consulted only those whom he considered gentlemen, and though it appears that his sympathies lay with the *métis* and that he was a firm supporter of the missions, he roused great ill-feeling. This could all have been an issue of no great urgency, but there was also the active economic issue of the right to trade freely, both in furs and with the Americans.

This was the problem which really worried John Ballenden as Chief Factor, for the Company had shed its governmental commitments and had hoped to be left free to pursue its business, with Caldwell and the pensioners to maintain its undoubted right to exclusive trade. But the petty traders were still there, and Norman Kittson was still at Pembina. MacDermot, Sinclair, and the wealthy private traders had been silenced, but illicit trade remained and more and more small men were becoming involved in it. For this it is probable that the root-cause was Simpson's decision not to buy out Kittson but to drive him out of business, for Kittson was still at Pembina, successful and determined, and stronger than ever. The American Fur Company, with which Simpson had come to terms, had virtually gone out of business in 1847 and had left the field to

Kittson, while the expansionist school of American politicians, 'the war-hawks of the middle west', had raised their sights after the establishment of the Territory of Minnesota in 1849 and were aiming at occupation of the territory up to Pembina, for which the first move was a military expedition in the summer of 1849. It was anticipated that the United States government would, according to common practice, negotiate the purchase of the land from the Indians, and Pembina began to show an influx of Indians and *métis* who hoped to be 'in on the deal'.

An exclusive trade was going to be very hard to maintain in such circumstances, and hostility to the Company and its claims was made the more dangerous because in this instance Simpson had roused the hostility of the Roman Catholic missionary, Father G. A. Belcourt. An active and vigorous man, who enjoyed the great advantage of being able to talk to the Indians without an interpreter, Belcourt was immensely popular with the *métis*. Simpson, normally favourable to the Roman Catholics, whom he considered admirably qualified for the Indian mission field as long as they did not fog the Indians' mind by rancour against the Protestant missions, supported Belcourt in his first mission at Baie St. Paul on the Assiniboine, when he achieved a fair measure of success. But Belcourt came out strongly in favour of the independent rights of the Indians and of the *métis*, and by 1847 Simpson set to work to secure his withdrawal. Convinced (rightly as it appears) that Belcourt had framed the 'calumnious petition' of 1846 (which Sinclair had carried to London) Simpson got Bishop Provencher to recall Belcourt to Canada by refusing to allow a permanent Roman Catholic mission at Moose (a firm desire of the Bishop's) until Belcourt was withdrawn. Belcourt was allowed to return merely to settle his affairs, and he then lost no time in transferring himself to Pembina, where Simpson's influence did not run. Here he ranged himself behind Kittson, and behind A. H. Sibley (the fur-trader who had become representative of the new state of Minnesota in Congress), extolling the freedom of American citizenship and enticing over three hundred *métis* to settle at Pembina in 1848—a figure which was soon to rise to over a thousand.

To counteract the combined influence of Kittson and Belcourt, the Hudson's Bay Company sent John Edward Harriott to trade in the Pembina area, with instructions to outbid the Americans and the *métis* and get the Indians' furs even at a loss. But Kittson was deeply committed, and as better prices ruled at Pembina the *métis* and the petty traders found they could get a profit by buying from

the Indians and selling either to Kittson or to the Company. It was even alleged that Harriott commissioned *métis* to purchase furs on his behalf, and that the prices given at Pembina were such as to draw away trade from Red River and to increase the smuggled trade. The logic of the separation of government from the fur trade dictated that in this quandary Chief Factor Ballenden should appeal to the civil government to enforce the law and to vindicate the Company's right of exclusive trade. In May 1849, therefore, Ballenden had Pierre Sayer and three other *métis*, McGillis, Laronde and Goullé, accused of illicit traffic in furs with the Indians. This, said Alexander Ross, 'well nigh completed the circle of folly'. It was only the second time, over a quarter of a century, in which the Company had taken any active steps to suppress the illicit trade.

Neither the buffalo hunt nor the boat brigades had left the settlement by 17th May, the day on which the case of the Hudson's Bay Company *versus* Sayer started. So the *métis* were in the settlement in great numbers, and the common interest of the case had fostered a rumour that they would assemble in force to watch the trial. They were in fact organised by a committee whose purpose was to prevent the trial and to assert their freedom to trade in furs. They had taken counsel with Belcourt and had got from him a message, addressed to Louis Riel, dit l'Irlande, a newly-immigrant and masterful leader of the *métis*. Belcourt believed that the Company's Charter was invalid and that resistance to their grant of exclusive trade would be legal. His letter to Riel certainly urged the *métis* to turn out armed and ready to defend their rights, and the priest's inflammatory words were read at the door of the Roman Catholic cathedral-church, St. Boniface's, at the end of Mass on the Sunday preceding the trial.

The morning of the 17th therefore witnessed a formidable concentration of the *métis*, moving in on Fort Garry and the courthouse, with the declared intention of resisting the proceedings of the court. The settlement bore the appearance of mob-rule, and Caldwell decided not to provoke a clash by giving the court such protection as the pensioners might have offered. In any case, he had no officer available, for he had suspended Captain Foss from duty; and he had been assured that neither the English nor the Scottish half-breeds would act as special constables on such an occasion. Caldwell's report of this historic occasion was far from clear, but on the day he did not lack courage. Despite the rabble, almost four hundred armed men rushing in all directions, whooping and yelling, the Major as Governor took his seat in court, walking 'like another private gentleman' without even his usual guard of honour. Adam

Thom too, despite threats to burn his house, took his seat with a courage which he never lacked.

But, when the case was called, Sayer was not present in court although he had been released on bail from prison. Alexander Ross, who was an eyewitness of the affair, said that Sayer was kept from appearing by an armed body of *métis*; other accounts say he was at Mass, and as Mass ended Riel addressed the *métis* and spurred them on to free Sayer and to win freedom of trade. At this stage James Sinclair stepped forward as 'Chief of the Half-breeds'—perhaps in order to keep the movement from degenerating into a riot, perhaps with the purpose of securing a hearing for the *métis*' views—and offered, with others, to act as delegates from the armed mob. Recorder Adam Thom, whose life was openly threatened, calmly made the legal point that such delegates could not be received in a court of law, and provoked Sinclair to challenge the Company, on the ground of the Parliamentary discussions and enquiries which were then proceeding, stimulated by A. K. Isbister and the proposals to grant Vancouver Island to the Company.

Eventually it was agreed that Sinclair should appear as counsel for Sayer, and he secured a jury of five Frenchmen and seven Englishmen. There was no attempt to deny that Sayer had traded most of his furs for liquor, and had not trapped them himself. But it was alleged that Harriott, whom the Company had sent out as a roving trader to counteract the Americans, had told the *métis* he would accept any furs which they had traded and had not forbidden them to trade furs from other *métis* although he had forbidden trade with Indians. This was probably true, though Chief Factor Ballenden denied it, and it was certainly the general notion held by the *métis* as to the Company's attitude. Nevertheless the jury, reminded by Thom of the Company's rights under the Charter, found Sayer 'guilty of Trading Furs'.

This, of course, should have meant a vindication of the Company's exclusive right to trade in furs. But precisely the opposite was the outcome, for the jury made a recommendation for mercy on the ground that the *métis* were genuinely under the impression that there was a free trade. Ballenden as representative of the Company said he would be content with the verdict and the recommendation, and would drop his case against the other accused *métis*, and so Sayer came out to the crowd, convicted indeed, but free and unpunished. The subtleties of the situation were too much for the assembled *métis*. A *feu de joie* greeted the verdict, and with cries of 'Vive la liberté! La Commerce est libre' they smothered any thought that

Ballenden might have achieved a legal vindication of precisely the opposite view. In accepting the recommendation of the jury the Company (through its agent John Ballenden) was virtually accepting the right of the half-breeds to trade in furs and was accepting them as competitors in pursuit of the Indians and their furs. It was a tolerable situation because, whatever the legal punctilio might be, in 1849 the private trader at Red River (notwithstanding the American supply-line) would normally be dependent upon the Company for his supplies and could easily be made dependent upon the Company for his market. Given suitable prices the private trader would trade with the Company and would become the Company's agent for collecting furs.

This was the interpretation which Simpson put upon the affair when he returned to Red River in June 1849. He was later to tell a government commission that he saw no basic conflict between the interests of the Company and a policy of settlement, 'provided the incoming population were restricted from interfering with the fur trade', and he readily fell in with the demands of the *métis* other than those concerning trade. This meant that, in accordance with his declared acceptance of colonisation, where appropriate, he applied the contemporary notions of liberal self-government. He did not, however, accept the attack on Adam Thom although he found a way out of the difficulty. The Council of Assiniboia decided that the objects of the *métis* were, first the immediate removal of Recorder Thom; second, the use of French as well as English in the conduct of all judicial business; third the abolition of the existing duties on imports from America; fourth the incorporation of some Canadians and *métis* into the Council of Assiniboia; and fifth, a free trade in furs. The Council weighed up this mixture of animosities and ambitions and decided that, since Thom was perfectly competent to conduct the judicial business in French as well as in English, he should retain his office. The duties on American goods were, after a slight delay, standardised at four per cent. But the composition of the Council was referred to Simpson, and freedom of trade in furs was declared to be a subject on which only the Crown in Parliament could legislate.

There was in these demands an element of French-Canadian nationalism and it was this, as much as the desire for a cast-iron dictum on freedom to trade, which led the *métis* to organise their own Council and to put their demands before Simpson when he came to the colony. Simpson, well aware of the way in which Thom inflamed the *métis*, persuaded him not to exercise his office though he

continued to hold it, and in 1850 the Governor and Committee also supported Thom, emphasising the independence of the judiciary, as a principle, and the honesty of Thom as a fact. But realism forbade that more should be done. Though the unpopular Recorder was made Clerk of the Court in 1852—a position in which he could use his knowledge to expound the law, without carrying judicial responsibilities—this was nullified by *métis* hostility, for the only way to avoid a direct challenge to the Company was to persuade Thom not to appear in court even in his new capacity. So although Thom was not actually dismissed from office until 1853, Simpson and the Company had in effect surrendered to *métis* hostility on this point.

French-Canadian hostility to Adam Thom was a perfectly understandable, if slightly reprehensible, sentiment. The *métis*' desire for direct representation in the Council of Assiniboia was equally understandable, and quite unexceptionable; so while Simpson procrastinated over Thom he readily accepted the demand for representation. No principle was necessarily involved in this, for Cuthbert Grant had been a Councillor for many years. But the underlying purpose of the demand was important, and it pointed directly to a concept of the colony as a self-governing community, clearly different from a settlement whose councillors were nominated by the Company. Simpson made no bones over the innovation. Taking council with the Roman Catholic Bishop Provencher, he nominated six half-breeds, of whom one was connected by marriage to Norman Kittson and two had been leaders of the *métis*. It was a bold policy, and it proved to be more than the Governor and Committee could fully support, for they doubted the value of Bishop Provencher's opinion though they later favoured the appointment as Councillor of the experienced missionary priest Louis Lafèche.

By such means Simpson and the Council virtually accepted the colony as a potentially independent, self-governing, and partly French-speaking community. The working out of the possibilities lay in the future; in the meantime Simpson and the Company secured peace in the colony, a peace based upon acceptance of the colony's aspirations, not upon military force to support the Company's claims. So far was policy pushed in this direction that the Committee rejected Simpson's proposal to shoulder the cost of a military force for the settlement. Willing though they were to increase the number of pensioners (a plan of which the Colonial Office approved) they told Simpson it would be better to license the private traders and then buy their furs from them rather than to force their rights on the settlers by a regular military garrison.

The Company had accepted the colony in an uneasy partnership at Red River, as a result of the Sayer trial in 1849. The exact terms of the partnership were not yet clearly defined, but the all-important move had been made with what the Committee called 'concession to the imperative demands of the disaffected half-breeds'. Concession to the half-breeds entailed greater emphasis on a policy of building the sober and responsible elements in the colony into a balanced community which could itself manage the *métis* and could build up an economy which would not depend on the Company. Simpson had for years maintained that the Governor of Assiniboia should not be an officer of the Company. But although Major Caldwell, the first independent Governor to be appointed, proved an admirable witness to the Company's régime, he was even more of a liability than a Governor openly employed by the Company would have been. John McLaughlin in England continued his attack on the Company by indicting Caldwell and his report before the Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey. With Caldwell, therefore, the Company was getting the worst of both worlds, was being blamed for the mistakes made by the Governor while it had no control over him.

Some change was necessary, and it was natural that the first direction in which change should be sought would be to increase the Company's control. This need not imply a desire to resume authority, merely a desire to give effective leadership. Simpson, if he could have given his time to the colony, would without doubt have set out on a firm policy, and in 1849 he needed but little time to arrive at a solution which reconciled the claims of the Company with those of the *métis*. But Simpson had for years been loth to live at Red River, his life was bound up in the great house at Lachine, and he was at this time seriously thinking about retirement from the fur trade. Even before the Sayer trial took place, in January 1849, the Committee had therefore decided to give him a young colleague as 'Governor of Rupert's Land to preside at all Councils of Chief Factors, and to attend to all other duties of Governor in the absence of Sir George Simpson'. The Associate-Governor was also made a Councillor of Assiniboia; and Eden Colvile was appointed.

Eden Colvile was just thirty in 1849, the only surviving son of Selkirk's sister and of that Andrew Wedderburn (later called Colvile) who had chosen Simpson for the Company's service, and who had played so vital a part in the re-organisation of the Company. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, young Colvile was given a job by the London Land Company, a body which had succeeded to the North American Colonial Association of Ireland

for the purpose of developing the Seigneury of Beauharnois on lines advocated by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. The Colonial Reformers were well represented in the enterprise; Earl Durham was a director, and so was Wakefield himself. The Hudson's Bay Company was also interested, for Andrew Colville was Deputy Governor of the Land Company, as of the Hudson's Bay Company, George Simpson was a director, and it was Edward Ellice, Junior, who sold the Seigneury of Beauharnois (later to resume it when the Land Company had failed to develop it). How much effective work young Colville put into the Land Company is not clear. It did not prosper, and some of the blame was laid at his door. But before he returned to England in 1848 he had begun to take an active part in Canadian politics, sitting in the Legislative Council as representative of Beauharnois; and Simpson had already begun to suggest him as a possible colleague and had taken him on a tour to Red River and Norway House.

The diversion of Eden Colville, from general duties to the Red River Colony, was neither immediate nor complete. He came out from England in 1849 and went up to Norway House from Lachine in company with Simpson. Then he went on, accompanied by Chief Trader Paul Fraser, up the Saskatchewan to Cumberland, on to Ile-à-la-Crosse, to Athabaska and then up Peace River to Dunvegan and so over the Rockies and down the Columbia to Fort Victoria and Fort Vancouver.

The experience gave Colville a fair insight into the Company's problems from coast to coast. His return to Rupert's Land and his attendance at the Council of the Northern Department at Norway House in June 1850 left him still better informed, and when he met his wife, newly arrived from England, and took her with him to Red River, he had behind him a range and variety of experience which only Simpson had rivalled at so early a stage in his career. The young Associate-Governor of Rupert's Land could reckon that he would be an influential person as a Councillor of Assiniboia. He found the colony prosperous as a result of a good harvest, and the buffalo hunt had gone well although the Sioux had caused some trouble. But the colony was in revolt against Governor Caldwell, and Colville was met by a petition which begged him to reverse the policy of the Company and of Simpson and to assume the Presidency of the Court and Council in his capacity as Governor of Rupert's Land. Fully aware that in so doing he was acting contrary to the Company's policy, but convinced that refusal must result in agitation for representative institutions, 'a system of government, for which the people are

wholly unfit', Colville accepted the Presidency of the Court and Council though with reservation of the Company's right to appoint Councillors.

Apart from dissatisfaction with Caldwell, the colony was plagued by an internal dispute in which the substantial Presbyterian community claimed the fulfilment of Selkirk's promise of a Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian minister, and it was also suffering from its first major scandal—the unsavoury little *peccadillo* of Mrs. Ballenden with the flashy Captain Christopher Foss.

This affair had split the little community long before it was brought to court in July 1849. As wife of the Company's Chief Factor at Red River Mrs. Ballenden was thrown much into the company of Caldwell's second-in-command, since the pensioners and their officers were quartered at Upper Fort Garry. As the scandal mounted settlers and officers took sides, and eventually Foss sued the Company's accountant at Fort Garry and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Pelly, and the mess steward and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. John Davidson, for conspiracy to slander. The resultant case of *Foss vs. Pelly* brought out two difficulties in the attempt to run the colony and the Company in partnership. First, no magistrate would act with Caldwell. He had to hold court alone, and when after three days he gave judgment and damages in favour of Foss he roused the deep resentment of the Pelly faction (for the trial had revealed adequate grounds for scandal) and he confirmed his own reputation as a judge who knew no law.

This was an unenviable reputation, but not one of which Caldwell was himself ashamed; he had gained it in a previous case, that of *Matheson vs. Thom*, in which he had allowed the Recorder, who was defendant in this paltry civil action, to show flagrant contempt of court. It was Adam Thom again who provoked the second manifestation of the weakness in the colony's government in the *Foss vs. Pelly* case, for he had already been consulted by Foss and Mrs. Ballenden before the case began. Later, as the technicalities of the case got beyond Caldwell, Thom was called into court to exercise the office of Recorder, which he still nominally held. This was against Simpson's expedient for calming the *métis*' opposition to Thom by keeping him out of court, and Caldwell stated that the Recorder was only allowed to exercise his office by sufferance of the *métis*. But even Caldwell admitted that Thom's appearance as judge, when he had already acted as advocate, was wrong, and he stoutly maintained (although he presided over the court himself) that substantial injustice was done.

The case of *Foss vs. Pelly* therefore brought into the open the colony's dissatisfaction with Caldwell while it also re-awakened the animus against Adam Thom. Colvile's arrival in August 1850 was opportune; the high office which he held, supported by his personal connections and his easy manner, enabled him to work out a subterfuge in which he presided at meetings of the Council without definitely deposing Caldwell from his office as Governor. To restore the colony to a status in which the Company's claims could survive, especially in the face of *métis* discontent, Colvile, albeit with considerable adroitness, had once more placed a Governor of Rupert's Land at the head of the colony. It was a reversal of policy which was bound to rouse opposition, and opposition was soon manifest, led by the clergy.

It would be too much to say that Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy were united in such opposition, for both their motives and their reactions were different. The Protestants were, on the whole, personal in their motives and were moved by friendship for Caldwell. They also resented the Company's policy of blowing cold upon new missions, for the Protestant clergy were anxious to spread out in rivalry with the Roman Catholics. Thus an Anglican mission under William Cockran failed at Beaver Creek and a proposal for one at Portage la Prairie met obstruction. The Company did not welcome the spread of missions up the Assiniboine, nor did their opposition cease for many years.

The Roman Catholic clergy, on the other hand, were deeply sympathetic to their *métis* laity and disliked intensely the reunion of colony and Company under the same leadership—and that the leadership of an English Protestant. Old Bishop Provencher was seeking the appointment of a co-adjutor Bishop of St. Boniface. His choice was Louis Laflèche, a determined missionary who had served at Ile-à-la-Crosse, had returned to Red River to become Provencher's Vicar-General, and who in 1850 and 1851 went to the plains with the *métis* buffalo hunts. Laflèche was appointed a Councillor of Assiniboia in 1850 and fully justified the choice. Though neither Laflèche nor Father Taché (also experienced in the field at Ile-à-la-Crosse), who was made Co-adjutor Bishop when Laflèche proved unacceptable, were opponents of the Company or champions of the *métis* in anything like the same sense as Father Belcourt in his mission at Pembina, their sympathies were nevertheless with those who favoured the French and *métis* declarations of freedom from Company rule.

In contrast, the crisis in the affairs of the Presbyterians was not a

crisis which led to resentment at renewed activity by the Company. On the contrary, the Presbyterians appealed past both Simpson and Colville to the Governor and Committee in London, and the solution proved satisfactory and lasting. The difficulty arose because Selkirk had promised the Scots of Kildonan that they should have a minister of their own faith and tongue—a Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian. He had himself given them a lot of land on which they might build their Church, but he died before he had provided the minister, and neither the Company nor his heirs had redeemed his promise. Lacking their own man, the Presbyterians had turned to the clergy of the Church of England whom the Company, in conjunction with the Church Missionary Society, organised, paid, and sent to the colony. Nicholas Garry's move in founding an Auxiliary Bible Society at York Fort in 1821 had been supported by the Committee, which had already appointed John West as its Chaplain for Red River and to administer such spiritual consolation to its servants as the nature of the country would permit. This appointment was to some extent the logical end to a prolonged interest in the problem of religious instruction at Red River—an interest dating back to Governor Semple's days—but in part it had been an Anglican reaction to the policy of sending up Roman Catholic priests to the colony. West himself seems to have served the Presbyterians but little. He was something of a visionary, he quarrelled violently with Simpson over Sunday trade and other matters, and he was deeply interested in education of the Indians. But although he was Chaplain to the Company rather than to the colony, he managed to get the first Protestant church built at the colony by 1823, on ground which the Company had provided (as they provided most of the materials) and using labour which the settlers themselves gave. The Presbyterians helped to build the church, and when the Company arranged with the Church Missionary Society that they should share the salaries of two clergy for the colony, and of a schoolmaster and a schoolmistress, the Presbyterians attended the services held by the Reverend David Jones and William Cockran, the two Anglican priests who came out to fill those posts in 1823 and in 1825 respectively. The first stone church was built by 1834 and there, at what was then known as the Upper Church, later to become St. John's Cathedral, the Presbyterians attended services in which the Church of England liturgy was modified for them.

The Upper Church was on land which the Presbyterian community claimed as having been granted to them by Selkirk; and they had helped to build the church. But although they seemed to enjoy

a reasonable position they never ceased to hope that Selkirk's promise would be redeemed and that they would get their own Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian minister, and this feeling was deepened when Abraham Cowley and John Roberts, newly-arrived Church of England missionaries, began to protest against the modifications in the liturgy which had been made. Stimulated by a visit from an American Presbyterian minister, the Scots petitioned the Governor and Committee to give them their own minister and, rebuffed in London, they turned to the Free Kirk of Scotland, who in turn referred them to the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

In 1849 and 1850, as Eden Colville was preparing to take up his appointment at Red River, the Presbyterians had every reason to hope that their Church in Canada would provide them with a minister, and they were asking Simpson for a building of their own, into which to install him. The new young Governor could therefore expect to be faced by a demand for the Upper Church, or at least for the land and for most of the fabric, while at the same time he knew that the Anglican community had been re-organised and reinforced and was most unlikely to yield. In May 1849 Rupert's Land had been made a diocese of the Church of England and David Anderson had been appointed the first Bishop. He found seven Anglican clergy in his diocese, and he brought to them a sense of purpose and of power which was soon manifest in a decision that the Upper Church must be torn down and replaced by a better-built edifice, more suitable to become his cathedral. The very choice of the Upper Church, of St. John's, to be the Anglican cathedral was in itself a challenge, especially since the burial ground attached to the church had for over thirty years been used as a Presbyterian burial ground.

With an offer of a site in Frog Plain and of £150 towards the building (an offer which the Council of the Northern Department had approved and which it was known that the Governor and Committee in London would accept) Colville apparently got the 'Presbyterian Question' settled, and that community soon got Kildonan Church built. But although on the arrival of John Black as Presbyterian minister in September 1851 the Presbyterians left the English church *en bloc*, the problem of their rights in the fabric and in the burial ground remained, and Bishop Anderson proved obdurate in refusing to recognise their rights in the burial ground. Eden Colville and the Governor and Committee alike prevented Anderson from consecrating the last resting place of so many Presbyterians according to Anglican rites, and the issue rumbled on for many years, overshadowed by the excellence of Black as an able and tolerant minister.

The solution of the 'Presbyterian Question' therefore remained incomplete, and when the Governor and Committee decided, early in 1851, not to approve of Eden Colvile attending the Council in any official capacity, the clergy were still at odds and could not be relied upon to give the colony that leadership which so young a community needed. Catholic and Protestant alike, they refused to accept nomination as magistrates, and so did many of the more responsible laymen, such as Sheriff Alexander Ross, who refused to act in any capacity with Caldwell. The latter had perforce been restored when Eden Colvile had obeyed his instructions from London and had told Caldwell that he could no longer attend the Council in any official capacity.

The result of Colvile's withdrawal from the colony's affairs was therefore that, with an ineffective Governor, the colony was dominated by magistrates and councillors who were Company's men. Caldwell had steadily lost the little respect and authority which he ever had. The Roman Catholic clergy were approved by Colvile, Simpson and the Company. 'I feel bound to say that in my opinion, they are much better fitted for missionaries in this country, than members of the English Church—from their self denial, and the way they accommodate themselves to the circumstances of the country, and my opinion is corroborated by that of every gentleman in the country', wrote Colvile. Suave and experienced, Bishop Provencher continued to preach moderation to the *métis*; but his subordinates were not always so prudent, and there were times when even the Roman Catholic priests met disapproval. Simpson blamed Laflèche and Bermond for their support of *métis* demands, but in fact they were occupying a moderate position, in sympathy with their flocks, midway between their Bishop's support of the Company and the bitter opposition which Belcourt conducted from across the border. While the Roman priests were moderate supporters of the Company, the new Presbyterian minister won almost universal approval by his honest enthusiasm and friendliness, and he pleased the Company by the way in which he refrained from meddling in secular affairs. His congregation, however, was still uneasy over the burial ground controversy, and its senior members refused to take part in government along with Caldwell.

To set against this, the Anglican Bishop and his priests were no source of strength or comfort to the Company. The Bishop himself, wrote Colvile, 'not only never thinks of what he is going to say, but . . . is utterly incapable of remembering what he has said'; it was impossible to reason with him, for he went unthinkingly into any

scheme which was put into his head by Cockran—and the Reverend William Cockran was very troublesome, 'more like a lunatic than anything else', and inclined to be mischievous. Cockran, it was suspected, was sour and discontented because the Bishop had put his nose out of joint, for he had been the senior priest; and he was certainly critical of the way in which the Company failed to support Anglican missions and projects for settling the *métis* and the Indians into agricultural communities. Such plans had failed at Portage la Prairie, at Beaver Creek, and at Brandon House. Plans were in the air for an Anglican mission to Athabaska, for a white settlement at Partridge Crop and for another at White Dog on Winnipeg River; but Colville held a poor view of missions and less still of parsons.

The Anglicans and the Presbyterians were, however, very largely confined to Red River. Only the Roman Catholics had effective missions elsewhere in the north-west (though an Anglican mission at Moose was under discussion), and much of the difficulty arose from the Company's reluctance to see ill-equipped Anglican missionaries spreading out from the colony, chiefly animated (as the Company thought) by hostility to the Roman Catholics. The Company was supposed to be moved by the feeling that the expenses of government would be increased by settlements, and also by a fear that settled Indians would be unproductive as fur-hunters. This the Company denied, and pointed to the help and encouragement which it made towards their salaries. But there was an element of truth in the allegation, for though, in Red River, the Company was reconciled to the existence of a settled population, and to the consequent rivalry in trade and complications in government, as accomplished facts, in the rest of the north-west the Company was more actively on the defensive. Its policy, as ever, was to prevent rivalry if possible, but to face it by ordinary commercial methods, if despite its care rivals should establish themselves—and at Red River the time had come for the second phase of this policy.

The apparent victory for Free Trade which the *métis* had won at the Sayer trial had been fully exploited during the months and years which followed. Good prices for beaver stirred the *métis* to greater efforts, and Colville in despair could see no remedy save to refuse to ship goods out for the traders. Simpson, however, had tried that move, and his policy was that of rivalling the free traders on ordinary commercial lines. The right of exclusive trade was not officially dropped, though in practice it was neglected and in 1853 Kittson was able to send over sixty carts of furs from Pembina to New York.

But in 1854 he was driven from his trade at Turtle Mountain by the price and quality of the Company's goods. In this the Company worked through *métis* and illicit traders as well as by trading generously itself. Even James Sinclair agreed in 1853 to rival the free-traders and to send his furs to the Company; McDermot too was reconciled, and Cuthbert Grant and Urbain Delorme were also active agents of the Company in opposition to the Americans.

In conceding the freedom of trade for which the *métis* had so long clamoured, the Company had won allies and agents from among its opponents, and with its 'runners' and its series of outposts at Touchwood Hills, at Fort Ellice, Turtle Mountain, Long River and Pembina, it drove its trade to the American frontier and even south beyond it. An outpost at Lake Roseau, in 1850, was certainly on American soil, and though the traders agreed on a frontier, in the following year the Company's goods were arrested and unfortunately proved to include a keg of rum. This, however, was but one minor set-back. Better prices, and a better range of goods, gave the Company such power that by 1854 Kittson was driven into retirement. In this the Company had been helped by the action of the American government, which had set up a customs post at Pembina and subjected Kittson to tolls, while the hostile priest Belcourt and his mission had suffered from floods and from the way in which the American Government made the *métis* pay like white men for lands taken from the Indians in Minnesota. Belcourt withdrew his mission to St. Joseph's, where it had less influence on the *métis* than it had exercised at Pembina. But, important as these factors undoubtedly were, the outcome was a victory for Simpson's firm policy of refusing to make any arrangement with Kittson, and of driving him out of the trade.

This, however, was a triumph for a superior trading technique, not for any system of exclusive trade based upon chartered rights. From 1849 onwards the free, or illicit, trade had definitely increased and the Company's agent at Pembina, John Harriott, in some sense encouraged it by supplying the *métis* with trade-goods and by paying prices which were not only better than those which the Americans could afford but were also appreciably better than the Company paid at Red River. Simpson, before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1857, said that although the half-breeds did not demand a free trade in furs they practised it, and had done so for years. And his private opinion, as given to the Governor and Committee, was that 'The Company's charter as far as exclusive right of trade goes, is almost a nullity'.

The Company had, in fact, accepted colonisation, settlement, and self-government at Red River; it had anxiously tried to divest itself of the costs and responsibilities of government when it had realised that government had become necessary. For a short period it had even managed to get the British government to lend armed support to its chartered privileges. But when the military had been withdrawn and the Sayer Trial had shown the impossibility of maintaining chartered rights, however legal, in the absence of military force, the Company had accepted the situation and had met competition, effectively, by normal mercantile methods. This was a position which, as it proved, the Company found it exceedingly difficult to maintain. Especially it proved difficult to convince the Company's opponents that such an issue was fought out only on the basis of commercial competence, for they looked upon a refusal to carry in trade-goods for the free traders, or a refusal to sell them goods or to give supplies, as 'persecution' by the Company. Yet the Company had accepted freedom of trade, and the presence of a settled population at Red River, as established facts. But acceptance of the situation at Red River by no means implied a like acceptance elsewhere in the north-west.

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CHAPTER XXII

AMERICAN OPPOSITION IN THE COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT AND THE SNAKE COUNTRY

By the end of the struggle with the Northwesters the Company had established only the most tenuous hold west of the Rockies. This is scarcely to be wondered at since the route lay through Athabaska and Peace River, and in those key districts the rivalry had flared to its hottest pitch and the Company had barely maintained its posts. But Ignace Giasson had given hope of a fair trade from New Caledonia, and George Simpson had included a report on New Caledonia and plans for steady development there in his Report at the end of his first winter in Athabaska. As soon as it should prove possible, the Company's trade would be steadily developed in that ill-defined district, which centred round Fraser River and its dangerous route to the ocean. But little had been accomplished in New Caledonia, and nothing had been achieved to the south, in the Columbia district.

But although the Hudson's Bay Company had little to its credit west of the mountains the Northwesters had accomplished much. At the time of the coalition they brought to the joint concern their posts at Fort George (the former Astoria), Walla Walla, Okanagan and its outpost Fort Alexandria at Kamloops, Spokane with its two outposts at the Kootenay and the Flathead. They had pushed their trade back from the mouth of the Columbia into the Rockies, they had developed a highly organised transport system which brought their goods over the Height of Land from the Upper Saskatchewan, and they were planning to run their posts in New Caledonia—McLeod Lake, Stuart Lake and Fraser Lake—in conjunction with the Columbia Department, using Fort Alexandria on Thompson River at Kamloops as the junction and Fort George as the depot. Their trade from west of the mountains was extensive, but was not profitable in proportion.

Such profit as came from the west coast came from the contact with Canton and China, as Alexander Mackenzie and the pioneers had foreseen. But even this proved a difficult and complicated trade. Mackenzie wrote that although a respectable business house in London combined with the North West Company, yet at the end of five years trade to the approximate value of £40,000 a year, the

North West Company wound up with a loss of about £40,000. The difficulties were held to be due to the privileges of the East India Company. The Northwesters' case was that the United States would surely dominate this trade if such obstacles persisted, and a fine cargo of furs was diverted to China in 1798, followed by a visit to China of the North West partner James Hallowell, who reported that China would absorb considerable quantities at good prices, could relieve the glut on the London market and raise prices there. Hallowell's return with a rich cargo of teas, silks and spices, did as much to confirm belief in the China trade as did his report. The trade continued, but with indifferent success even after a permit from the East India Company in 1812 promised relief from some of the obstacles. At that juncture the Northwesters sent John Stuart to take command in New Caledonia, to combine with the Columbia Department and with orders to go down to the sea, join John George McTavish there, and meet the ship which the North West Company intended to send round to Fort George. Much trust was placed in McTavish, who was exhorted to establish the business on a proper footing while Angus Bethune was to be sent to China as a super-cargo to learn the trade there. William McGillivray was convinced that the Columbia would support a lucrative trade if the China voyage were well managed. But, though the *Isaac Todd* brought back a cargo of tea which sold (on account for the East India Company) for over a hundred thousand dollars, she had cost over £40,000 to equip and her furs remained unsold at Canton, while McTavish failed to work smoothly with his colleagues.

Licking their wounds (as they faced the problems of the Red River Colony and of the Athabaska venture) the Northwesters wrote off a loss of £15,000 on the *Isaac Todd* while prices slumped in Canton and the East India Company proved far less co-operative than they had hoped. But they chartered a fresh ship, the *Columbia*, in 1815 and they urged the danger of this great trade falling into American hands as they petitioned the British Government for freedom to ship teas and other goods from China despite the East India Company, and (perhaps with some slight lack of logic) asked for a monopoly of the trade from the Rockies westward to the coast. The problem was complicated, for the Northwesters were realising that they understood the fur trade but not shipping, and were making an arrangement with J. and N. Perkins and Company, Boston shipowners, by which the Americans would ship trade-goods to the Columbia and then (unaffected as American citizens by the East India Company's claims) would ship the Columbia furs on to Canton.

At one stage Astor had been the ally of the Northwesters in their attempts to establish a China trade under the nose of the East India Company. But he had also been the chief exponent of the American claims to dominate the fur trade of the Middle West and of the Far West, and had almost inevitably come into conflict with the Northwesters on that issue. Since the United States had vindicated their independence the boundary between Canada and its southern neighbour had never been clearly defined throughout its length, and the history of negotiations to establish a definite frontier is, properly understood, a disillusioning commentary on the purposefulness of the British government. In general, British fur-traders and frontiersmen were in actual occupation of the disputed areas, United States citizens were present in small and ineffective numbers, and the United States government was powerless to exercise effective rule over the territories to which it claimed title.

Under Astor the American Fur Company, with its charter granted by the legislature of New York State, remained the chief exponent of American ambitions in the Middle West, and though the great concern was not above making arrangements with the North West Company, and later with Simpson and the Hudson's Bay Company, yet Sibley, Kittson, and the American opposition at Pembina were in the direct tradition of Astor and the American Fur Company. Astor, in the meantime, transferred his ambitions to the Pacific coast, but his Pacific Fur Company had already shown signs that it could not win the trade even before war-conditions played their part in securing the sale of Astoria to the Northwesters. Despite the advantages of the Missouri route, as developed by Stuart, the Pacific Fur Company depended upon sea transport both to get its trade-goods from Boston and to get its furs to market either in Canton or in London. The Cape Horn route was a far greater hazard than was navigation into Hudson Bay, if only for the reason that it kept ships so much longer at sea, and the China voyage also kept a ship in commission for anything up to three years.

The disasters to the ships of the Pacific Fur Company, and the obstinacy and incapacity of the ships' officers, were offset by the experience and determination of the fur-traders whom Astor had recruited. Alexander Ross displeased Simpson, and John Clarke proved to be pompous and vainglorious. But they both had great merits as traders, and with David Stuart, Donald McKenzie, Ross Cox and Duncan MacDougall, they gave the Americans a very fair grasp of the trade. With an outpost at the mouth of the Willamette they set up their posts inland at Okanagan, Kamloops and Spokane,

and, bringing the pack-horse to this branch of the trade, they opened up the territory between the Columbia and the Fraser and also began to send trapping parties into the Snake Country, to wander along the courses of the streams and take the beaver which the willow and poplar encouraged there, developing an alternative technique to that of the fixed post. But this competent and promising fur trade which the Pacific Fur Company had built up depended on a long and vulnerable sea route, and in 1812-13, under war conditions, that route failed completely.

When in October 1813 the Astorians, in despair at the inability of ships to reach them, surrendered their fort to the Northwesters they did not renounce the wider claims of American citizens to trade on the Columbia. On the other hand the Northwesters purchased the fort and its contents, and the Astorians thereby saved their property from being captured when, six weeks later, H.M.S. *Raccoon* arrived to take possession in the name of the British Crown. This formal possession by capture could be upset by the peace, and in general terms it was accepted that American rights were restored by the Treaty of Ghent. But when the Americans asserted that Astoria also should be so restored, the British denied the claim and maintained (with every justification) that the fort had not been captured but had been sold by its American owners. The question was complicated by the fact that Astor alone had put up the capital of the Pacific Fur Company and that he bitterly resented the 'sale' and denied its validity despite the permit which he had given to his partners to act on behalf of the concern. He proved an invaluable ally to Colin Robertson and was clearly resolved to challenge the Northwesters in every possible way.

So as the war of 1812 drew to its close Astor, with support from the American government, challenged the North West possession of Fort George and demanded its return. Against this challenge the Northwesters got but weak support from the British government, for while Castlereagh merely suggested arbitration, the Americans sent the *Ontario*, sloop, to take possession and, rather than be responsible for an act of war, the British government sent out H.M.S. *Blossom* with a letter from Lord Bathurst as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, to instruct James Keith that Fort George must be handed over pending a settlement of the dispute on title.

If the British government was equivocal in its claims, the North West Company was outspoken. The Northwesters maintained that they had properly acquired possession of Astor's post by purchase and not by conquest. They had stepped up their shipments to the

Columbia from about £15,000 in 1815 to almost £27,000 in 1817 and almost £29,000 in 1818, and in that year they built a new post at Nez Perces. Fearing that American claims might be conceded, they were planning that if necessary this post (Walla Walla) might serve as a general depot for the whole coast instead of Fort George. This would be particularly helpful for improving the trade of New Caledonia, but even so the Northwesters were not optimistic about the prospects of trade from that quarter.

It says much for the Northwesters' determination, and for their hope that the Columbia trade might yet prove their salvation, that they developed their trade even after Lord Bathurst had decided that the American claims must be accepted. First came the *Columbia*, in June 1818; then the *Levant* from Boston to take on a cargo of furs to Canton. She had been detained off Valparaiso and was late in arrival, but she was safely away before the American sloop *Ontario* arrived, carrying Judge Prevost with instructions to take formal possession of the post. The Americans, however, did nothing to counter the refusal of James Keith to accept their authority save to nail an inscribed board to a tree, and stalemate seemed likely when on 1st October H.M.S. *Blossom* sailed into the river with her instructions from Bathurst. Bathurst's instructions roused the deepest opposition. Simon McGillivray proposed that the post should be burned instead of being handed over, and James Keith, although he decided that the post should be given up, would allow no formalities save the change of flag, and maintained that further discussions should then take place. The American envoy Prevost proved so conciliating that he almost gave away the American case, for he not only deferred any decision on the future of the post, to await the decision of the American President, but he promised the Northwesters that their claims would be met; this, if it meant anything, meant that the claim that the post was North West property by purchase and not by conquest would be met.

But just as the American posts had not been affected (save economically) by the sale of Astoria, so the North West trade was by no means rooted out when Astoria, renamed Fort George, passed back into American hands. The partners immediately began to build a new fort a mere three hundred yards away, and the co-existence of the two parties was confirmed and prolonged when a temporary solution was found to the problem of title in October 1818. By the Convention concluded on 20th October, 1818, it was agreed that for ten years any country claimed by either state to the west of the Rockies should be free and open to the citizens of both

states and to their shipping. This was not to be construed as affecting the legal title of either state, and though the Americans remained in possession of Fort George itself the Northwesters retained possession of their other posts, they built anew alongside the Americans, and in due course they handed over their Columbia Department and their New Caledonia Department as active trading concerns, together with their more general claim as British subjects to trade to the west of the Rockies, to the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the meantime the situation had developed further, for the United States settled its boundary to the south with California at 45° and so ended any Spanish claims to the Columbia. But as if to balance this the Russians claimed that the whole coast down to 45° belonged to them, and it was not until 1825 that their claims were set firmly on one side by the treaties between Russia, the United States and Great Britain, which set the Russian frontier at $54^{\circ} 40'$ and so left Great Britain and the United States to share possession and trade, and to dispute title and ownership, between $54^{\circ} 40'$ and 45° , the area from Alaska to California.

Title was therefore under hot dispute, trade was active but expensive, and the all-important link with China was insecure, as the North West Company ended its Columbia venture. So when the newly re-organised concern began to take stock in 1822 the Governor and Committee wrote to Simpson that the most they hoped was that sound management might reduce the inevitable loss in Columbia, and this they thought would be sound policy, to treat it as a frontier district protecting the more valuable districts to the north from American competition. They faced the possibility that Simpson and his Council might decide to abandon the Columbia trade, and they were reasonably sure that it would be better to ship the furs to London rather than to China, for a combination of the poor quality of the Columbia beaver and the trickiness of the Canton market had produced a series of bad sales at Canton. But New Caledonia seemed to offer better prospects, for while the Company had inherited the Northwesters' grievance at Colonial Office apathy in the surrender of Fort George, and reluctance to oppose American claims, the Committee thought that government would support any policy which countered the Russians, and so they told Simpson to extend posts to the west and north from Fraser River in New Caledonia.

John Lee Lewes, the sturdy Hudson's Bay man, had in fact taken control of the Columbia Department in 1821, and he reported to Simpson that trade there had vastly improved and that there were still immense tracts to be explored and developed, while each of the

three districts in the interior (Walla Walla, Thompson River and Spokane) had increased its returns. The shipment to Canton of 1822 was also promising, and new arrangements under licence with the East India Company were even made to continue that branch of the trade. So although James Keith (then in London) reported to the Committee that the English under the Convention were only 'Tenants at will' of the Americans, and that projected American development would make further competition useless and even dangerous, nevertheless both the Committee and Simpson resolved to continue. In this the experience of 1823 seemed to justify them.

The Committee were spurred on by good sales to Canton in 1822, by the Russians forbidding trade on the north Pacific coast to all save Russians by the imperial ukase of 4th September, 1821, and by low prices at the fur sales in England. The Committee urged the British government to oppose the proceedings of the American and Russian governments while Simpson was pressed to extend trade in New Caledonia with the express purpose of keeping the Russians at a distance. Chief Factors John Haldane and John Dugald Cameron, who had been appointed to the Columbia in 1821, were asked to report in detail on the possibilities of the coastal trade and Haldane (who came on leave to England in 1822) was closely questioned on the subject. Then, as it became clear in 1823 that the British and American governments would resist Russian pretensions, Simpson was instructed that the trading establishment on the Columbia must be continued until a couple of years' experience should have clarified the situation.

More than this holding policy was accomplished, for Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy, succeeding Haldane in the Columbia in 1822, with his seat at Spokane House where the Snake Country hunters were outfitted, decided that the Snake Country was the chief source of the returns from the Columbia but that the Iroquois and freemen who composed the bulk of the parties sent to hunt there were lazy and undisciplined to a shocking degree. He had been empowered to organise trappers under a half-breed leader, and in 1823 he not only sent Michel Bourdon in this capacity but added Finan McDonald and five regular servants of the Company. At the same time the Company brought back into the trade two men whose chief claim was that they seemed likely to be of value in the competitive and adventurous conditions of the Columbia trade. Samuel Black and Peter Skene Ogden were a pair of redoubtable characters, impressive traders of herculean proportions, rigorous and uncompromising in their approach to rivals and to Indians alike. In any

field of opposition they would be invaluable. But in the early months of 1823 they were not even in the Company's employ, great as were the claims which they had upon many influential members of the Board for the Management of the Trade.

It is difficult to draw any clear distinction between the two, as they stood in 1822, outside the Company. But Simpson always seemed more favourable to Ogden who, better born, better educated, had not come into personal opposition with Simpson as Black had done. Black, too, shared with Simpson the fact that he had been born on the wrong side of the blanket in a Scottish village, and Black may perhaps have been the exception to the Governor's normal indifference on this subject. But in truth little subtlety is needed to explain why Simpson should not have taken kindly to Black, for they were utterly different. In 1822 Simpson was still a remarkable novice in the fur trade, bringing to it qualities of personality, and a capacity for close analysis and reduction to method, which had been developed elsewhere. Black had enjoyed but little formal education, but his mind was vigorous and original where Simpson's was analytical and eclectic, and he was a seasoned veteran in the fur trade. Probably through the influence of his uncle James Leith, Black had been brought to the Canadian fur trade by Alexander Ellice in 1802, and by the time of the coalition of the two companies he had behind him a long and stormy career. From the XY Company (where he quarrelled with the redoubtable Alexander MacKenzie) he passed to the service of the North West Company and pursued an uproarious policy of 'premeditated villainy' in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company's posts in Peace River, Athabaska and at Ile-à-la-Crosse. His activity in terrorising Peter Fidler, the clash with Joseph Howse's party at Fort Augustus in 1815 in which three Hudson's Bay men were killed, the second fatal clash at Green Lake, and his part in capturing Colin Robertson, all added to his reputation and he had (almost for a certainty) frightened Simpson by his very presence at Athabaska Lake. So, while his associates presented him with a ring inscribed 'To the most worthy of the worthy Northwesters', the friends of Selkirk proscribed 'Black of Athabasca' from the Deed Poll. He probably spent the winter of 1821-2 on the Columbia, to which he had retreated from Athabaska, and from there he made his way to Canada and so to England in 1822, to put his case before the new Committee of Management of the Hudson's Bay Company.

On this journey Black was accompanied by Ogden, who had also spent the winter in the Columbia, for although he was not included

in the Deed Poll Ogden had by request stayed on to manage the post on Thompson River. A son of The Honourable Isaac Ogden, Judge of the Admiralty Court at Quebec, Peter Skene inherited both the intellectual equipment and the independent spirit of the New England lawyer who had immigrated to Canada as a Loyalist rather than forfeit his British citizenship by remaining in the United States. His father had removed to Montreal (where he was appointed a puisne judge) by the time Peter Skene was born in 1794, and there the sturdy boy grew up in close contact with the fur trade, to join the North West Company in 1809 as a clerk and to win a partnership in 1820. *Lex non scripta* was his motto in the struggle between the two companies: 'My legal primer', said Ogden, 'is that necessity has no laws', and his career was so full of incidents which won him the character of the 'humorous, honest, eccentric, law-defying Peter Ogden, the terror of the Indians, and the delight of all gay fellows' that he was transferred to the isolation of the Columbia in 1818.

There is an atmosphere of boisterous good humour hanging round Black and Ogden. But both had been accused, probably with justification, of actual murder during the struggle of the two companies. They were clearly characters of enormous power, and though in August 1822 Simpson had not been enthusiastic and had frowned upon a move for their admission, yet when the Board for the Management of the Trade had met in London (with both William and Simon McGillivray present) and had recommended that the two black sheep be admitted at salaries equivalent to Chief Traders though only at the official status of clerks, Simpson changed his mind. The negotiations had been tortuous, and Simpson's part remains obscure (for he seems to have made some sort of recommendation to Colvile; or perhaps Colvile was merely flattering the little man by pretending that the idea came from him) but the grant of the status of Chief Trader lay with Simpson and his Council. At their meeting in July 1823 the Council lost no time in admitting Black and Ogden to the trade, in recommending them for appointment as Chief Traders as though they had been admitted in 1821, and in appointing them to their posts.

Simpson was not only affected by the favour which the Committee had shown. He also had the Columbia problem on his mind, and the Council followed up the admission of Ogden and Black by appointing Ogden to Spokane House District where he was to fit out a Snake Country expedition which Alexander Ross was to lead in 1824, and by appointing Black to explore northwards from the river

known as Finlay Branch on the western side of the Rockies. Simpson was hoping to open up new country so as to offset the impoverishment which hard trapping had brought to Athabaska, and he hoped that exploration northwards from Finlay Branch would open up a waterway running parallel to Mackenzie River, so that the new territory might perhaps be approached from that river instead of via the difficult upper reaches of Peace River and Finlay Branch. He originally had Chief Trader Peter Warren Dease in mind for leader. Dease, however, decided that Simpson's instructions had come too late, in March 1823, for him to leave Fort Chipewyan and proceed on the ice up Peace River to Dunvegan so that he could make a start from there in canoes as soon as the river was free. Simpson accepted the reasoning, retained Dease in Athabaska, and within two days of his arrival at York from England, on 14th July, appointed Samuel Black to the expedition.

Black, therefore, had been swiftly and purposefully incorporated into Simpson's plans 'to explore the country on the west side of the Mountain north from Babine Lake in New Caledonia as far as practicable'. He was to spend the winter 1823-4 at St. John's, Peace River, making preparations and getting information from Indians, and he seems to have done this to such purpose that by the time he set off from Rocky Mountain Portage in May 1824 he realised that when he had followed the Finlay River up to the Height of Land he would not expect to find a river leading north-westward to the Arctic; he would be looking for a river leading westwards. He would also expect to find the headwaters of the Liard River, leading down in a powerful torrent to Mackenzie Forks, and his task would be to choose between the streams leading westwards (the Stikine River) and those of the Liard, so that he could follow the Turnor technique of exploring down-river and so could come to the Mackenzie and (as Simpson hoped) winter 1824-5 at one of the posts on the Mackenzie. He was for the moment installed on Peace River, making his preparations, but he marked the adoption of an active policy for confirming and improving the trade of New Caledonia.

Ogden in the meantime had taken up his appointment at Spokane and had sent Alexander Ross out to command the Snake Country expedition in the spring of 1824 in replacement of Finan McDonald. That tough old Northwesterner, who knew the Snakes since he had come there with David Thompson in 1807, had had enough. He had run into 'Saviral Battils' with the Piegans, had lost Michel Bourdon, the leader of his trappers, and five of his men, had suffered badly by having his horses stolen, and had killed about

seventy Indians. His returns were good—about four thousand beaver—but Finan coined a famous phrase when he wrote that ‘when that Cuntre will see me agane the Beaver will have Gould Skin’

It was difficult to imagine much improvement of the Snake Country trade, but from Walla Walla Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy, and from Fort George Chief Traders Lewes and McMillan, all sent good returns, and Simpson hoped that with the Columbia itself as a sheet anchor New Caledonia and the Snake Country might both be re-organised, and in their turn made profitable. Simpson proposed to visit Spokane House and look into the matter.

The Snake Country expeditions were therefore also pushed on. In 1822 the Snake Country occupied about two hundred and twenty men. But only about half of these, or less, were full employees of the Company. The rest were ‘supposed trappers’, ‘free’ Iroquois or ‘free’ Canadians who received their outfit of supplies, ammunition and often a horse, from the Company. They were organised into parties, directed to certain areas, and to some extent led and disciplined, by the Company’s officers, but they were under no contract of service. The Northwesters had introduced the Iroquois hunter to the west as they moved across the prairies and up the foothills of the Rockies in the wake of the beaver, which they were steadily exterminating.

Parties of freemen were an obvious device for a frontier district in which, so far from the conservation of furs being an object of policy, opposition would be kept at a distance if the area could be trapped bare. Ross and his Snake Country party therefore had full support, and his returns in 1824 were yet another argument in favour of the Columbia trade; but the way in which a number of his freemen and Iroquois had ‘deserted’ with their furs to an American trading and trapping party under Jedediah Smith underlined the necessity for the Snake Country to be organised by a stronger man than Alexander Ross, and for the policy of ruthless trapping to be pursued before the Americans made the Snake Country their own. So, although the Council at York had again appointed Ross to the Snake Country in July 1824, Simpson sent the good (but weak) man to be schoolmaster at Red River and so arranged things that in December Ogden himself set off from the Flathead post with a party of fifty-eight freemen and servants and two hundred and sixty-eight horses.

This was a determined approach under a determined leader. At the same time Simpson himself postponed his journey to England to seek a bride and prepared himself to go to the Columbia. By April 1824 negotiations between the British, the American and the

Russian, governments had fixed the southern frontier of the Russian claim at the Portland Canal in $54^{\circ} 40'$ north, and there was great hope that the frontier between Britain and the United States would be fixed at the Columbia River. The Committee therefore urged Simpson 'that the Snake River region, far to the south of the Columbia, should be exploited promptly, while it remained open to British traders'. His patron Wedderburn (Colville) particularly urged Simpson to visit the Columbia and put that important branch of trade in order before he settled down to a married life, and finding that his commissioned gentlemen knew little of that country and would willingly abandon it, Simpson had taken advantage of his winter at Red River, 1823-4, to discuss the Columbia fully with Donald McKenzie, whose early exploits had set the Snake Country trade upon its feet.

More than stimulation of the Caledonia trade by Black, or stimulation of the Snake Country trade by Ogden, was called for. The major problems of supplies, communications and economy, all needed investigation. The Council of the Northern Department was wondering whether a ship sent every second year to the Columbia might not suffice instead of an annual vessel. The Committee had sent out a special ship, the *William and Ann*, to explore the coast northwards and Simpson, ever a believer in personal knowledge, was on his way to the Columbia in August 1824.

Even Simpson, however, did not believe that a single visit from himself would suffice to keep the vast department west of the Rockies well organised and profitable. Constant care and good management would be necessary, and at the Council of July 1824 the Columbia had been given a new master in John McLoughlin. So with Black engaged for Finlay Branch, Ogden committed to the Snake Country, McLoughlin appointed to the Columbia, to take command there in 1825, and Simpson himself travelling westwards with his customary speed, the western trade was the focus of the attention of much that was best in the Company. The careful accountancy and shrewd analysis of Simpson, the tough adventurousness of Black and Ogden, and the firm and uncompromising purpose of McLoughlin made a combination seldom to be equalled, never surpassed, of the qualities of the Northwesters and of the Hudson's Bay men. Upon the Pacific Slope were concentrated the hopes of the London Committee, the minute and vigorous care of Simpson, the energies of the two most intransigent Northwesters, and the determination of the most purposefully moderate of the former wintering partners.

Of this imposing array, John McLoughlin was certainly the most dominant in appearance, and perhaps in character also. Later to be acclaimed as the 'White-headed Eagle' of the Oregon, McLoughlin was just forty years old in 1824. The offspring of a Scottish grandfather, an Irish grandmother and a French-Canadian mother, John was connected with Alexander Fraser, the wintering partner of the North West Company and with Fraser's doctor-brother Simon, whose footsteps he followed when he trained for a medical career and was licensed to practise in medicine and surgery or as an apothecary in 1803. Then, however, instead of entering into practice, the sturdy and handsome young man (he was rising twenty) was persuaded that in the North West Company a lucrative future lay ahead of him. But from the start he was not entirely happy. Used as a surgeon at Kaministiquia during the summer months, he received no extra pay for this, but he acquired both skill and a considerable reputation when, during the winter seasons, he was sent out as a fur-trader, for his herculean stature and dignified appearance greatly impressed the Indians and he also proved himself a shrewd hand at a bargain.

The 'sad Experiment', as he called it, of McLoughlin's apprenticeship was over in 1808, and he would then almost certainly have left the fur trade. But he had determined to see his young brother David through a medical course at Edinburgh University, and when he had managed to drive William McGillivray up to a salary of £200 a year he accepted a clerkship for three years and then, at the end of that period in 1811, exacted the promise of a partnership as the condition of renewing his engagement. He seems to have wintered mainly in the Rainy Lake District and to have gone down to Kaministiquia regularly during the summers.

His reputation was considerable, but McLoughlin seems to have roused the opposition of William and Simon McGillivray, and to have reciprocated it; and he was highly critical even when the promise of a partnership was fulfilled in 1814. When something of a rift within the North West Company was caused by the first dispersal of Selkirk's Red River colony in 1815, McLoughlin was among those who disapproved of the use of force. Nevertheless his interest in the maintenance of the Northwesters' food supplies was realistic enough to see him on his way to the colony in June 1816. He arrived 'judiciously late' for the Massacre of Seven Oaks and the second dispersal of the settlers, but he was 'arrested' when Selkirk captured Fort William later that summer and was sent down to Toronto (York) for trial—and almost drowned on the way. He was fortunate in securing his release on bail, for it was two years before he was at

last tried for being an accessory, after the fact, in the murder of Semple—a charge of which he was speedily acquitted.

By this time McLoughlin was deeply worried; he was enraged by the blustering dominance of the agents over the wintering partners, and despite his fiery temper he was genuinely opposed to the calculated policy of intimidation upon which the North West Company was embarked. He took the lead in organising the winterers in 1819 into refusing to renew their partnership, and he was then the undoubted leader of the winterers who made contact with the Montreal merchant George Moffatt, and through him with Samuel Gale, Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company's Committee. McLoughlin was, as Robertson shrewdly diagnosed, the only wintering partner who could really stand up to the agents, and with eighteen of the winterers behind him he came to an open breach with the agents in September 1820, and then came with Angus Bethune to London to play his part in the ending of the conflict and the establishment of the new combined company.

The arrangements of 1821 brought McLoughlin into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. But from the start he seems not to have been completely satisfied, for he emerged with an overdrawn account with the North West Company and with a heavy bill for the law-suits in which his employment by that company had involved him; and ill-health kept him from the meetings at Fort William and at York Fort at which Nicholas Garry presided over the organisation of the new régime. McLoughlin was indeed made a Chief Factor, but he was not appointed to a post and spent the winter under his brother's care in Europe while his supporters were, by the malice of Simon McGillivray, 'thrown on the banks of Columbia, Lake Huron, and Hudsons Bay'. Simpson, however, knew McLoughlin's worth and promised him that, when his health had recovered, he would be appointed to his old district, where opposition from the petty traders of Lake Superior might be expected. Sure enough, when McLoughlin returned to Rainy Lake during the seasons 1822-3 and 1823-4, he met a lively American opposition; but he increased his returns and discomfited his rivals, and he won Simpson's approval thereby.

When the situation in the Columbia in 1824 called for active opposition to the Americans, stern discipline of the servants and impressive management of the unruly Indians, John McLoughlin was therefore the man whom Simpson chose. Not only was he fresh from successful opposition to the Americans, he was also utterly reliable, and of a most imposing presence. Simpson's description of the doctor as he came upon him when they were both *en route* for the

Columbia is a classic—‘he was such a figure as I should not like to meet in a dark Night in one of the bye lanes in the neighbourhood of London, dressed in Clothes that had once been fashionable, but now covered with a thousand patches of different Colors, his beard would do honor to the chin of a Grizzly Bear, his face and hands evidently shewing that he had not lost much time at his Toilette, loaded with Arms and his own herculean dimensions forming a tout ensemble that would convey a good idea of the high way men of former Days’. McLoughlin had been pushed to one side in the days when Simon McGillivray had made it appear that he was the real victor in the coalition of 1821, but his character and career left little doubt in Simpson’s shrewd mind that, if anyone could rescue the Columbia trade from its own incapacity and from the threats of Americans and Russians, McLoughlin was the man.

As he travelled westwards in the fall of 1824 Simpson was not yet convinced that anything could be made of the Columbia trade. True, as he approached the problem, some weaknesses which could be eliminated were revealed. As he passed by Spokane and the inland posts he scathingly noted their fondness for European provisions—‘all this time they may be said to have been eating Gold; such fare we cannot afford in the present time, it must therefore be discontinued and I do not see why one oz. of European Stores or Provisions should be allowed on one side of the Mountain more than the other’. Along with extravagance had gone neglect, and Simpson was as eager to smell out the one as the other; ‘if my information is correct’, he wrote, ‘the Columbia Deptmt from the Day of its Origin to the present hour has been neglected, shamefully mismanaged and a scene of the most wasteful extravagance and the most unfortunate dissention’. There would obviously be scope for ‘Oeconomy’ in the Columbia! There would be room too for his capacity to plan a district in relation to its communications and supplies, for much of the cost of hauling goods for the Columbia Department up from York Fort was due to the need for defence against the Indians *en route*. Moreover, the Committee had written to say that since Fort George was south of Columbia River and might be on American territory when the boundary discussions were resumed, a new post should be built north of the river.

Uncertain as Simpson was of the ultimate boundary, he was not anxious to embark on any course which would involve major expenditure; but his genius lay in running together the departmentalised concerns over which he dominated, and while he minimised transport costs by co-ordinating the brigades of the

Saskatchewan, Peace River and the Columbia, he approached the question of the Columbia depot from the point of view of co-ordinating that department with New Caledonia. He was reasonably convinced, even before he reached Fort George on 8th November, that the solution lay in creating a post at the mouth of Fraser River.

Simpson got from York Fort to Fort George in eighty-four days; but he had found time as he travelled to investigate the districts through which he passed, and he then settled down to spend the winter at Fort George and to sort out his impressions and make his plans. His winter sojourn left him far more favourably impressed by the Columbia Department than he had expected. His letters set out the defects which he found, the heavy consumption of European food, the ignorance and idleness of the traders, the neglect of the Snake expeditions and the poor quality of the hunters, and the excessive number of servants employed. Everything was on 'too extended a scale except the Trade', he wrote. But he talked much with Alexander Kennedy, who was due to hand over to McLoughlin, with McLoughlin himself, with James McMillan who had been in the Columbia with David Thompson and had been appointed there on the coalition in 1821. Simpson had made his journey over the Rockies in company with McMillan and knew the views of that shrewd and sensible man, as he called him. He had also weighed up the views of Ogden and of Work, and he had sent McMillan on an exploring voyage to the mouth of Fraser River and was greatly impressed by McMillan's favourable report. He emerged convinced that the Columbia trade could be made to yield double the profit on the capital employed that any other district would pay. He was fascinated by the grip upon his imagination which the Columbia trade exercised, and he was sure that, with support from the British government, Americans and Russians alike could be thwarted. He would gladly exchange his fixed salary for a share in the Columbia trade.

Simpson applied all his stock remedies, some of them appropriate, some inept. Corn could be grown at the door of the establishments, and agriculture must cut the costs of importing food from England, Boston or California. Staff must be reduced from 136 to 87 men: of 645 pieces of goods taken in to the Columbia, 462 were provisions and luxuries and only 183 were trade-goods. The winter express to the Columbia could be cut to eight men, and the whole supplies for the department should be cut to two hundred pieces. But more than 'Oeconomy' was needed. New Caledonia must be attached to the Columbia, and an active coasting trade must be run in conjunction

with the inland business, while the whole trade of the western slope must be tied into the Canton market by an arrangement with the East India Company.

Here Simpson went off into one of his more dangerous and extravagant misconceptions. He maintained that, whether the Americans came to the Columbia or not, the chief depot for the trade should be moved north to Fraser River, which he held to be more central for coastal trade and more easy of access to the interior than the Columbia. Admitting that Fraser River was little known (which he ascribed to Fraser and Stuart being so alarmed by the Indians that they took little account of the country) he sent James McMillan to explore it with a strong party of over forty men. They portaged their boats to Puget Sound from Fort George and then worked their way along the coast to the Fraser, where they were well received and found evidence of plentiful fur-bearing animals. They reported that the river was navigable by craft of a hundred tons and was tidal, with no shoals or rapids, sixty miles from its mouth, and that the Indians would welcome a post. True, there was a sand-bank or bar at the river's mouth, but the Indians said it was a fine bold stream, unspoiled by dangerous falls or rapids, right up to the Forks at Kamloops or Thompson River, and they were using goods which had been got from trade at Kamloops. Simpson, therefore, full of praise for McMillan's journey as the most creditable, thorough and effective, effort he had seen in the Indian country, was confirmed in his view that the correct policy was to transfer the Company's depot from the Columbia and to make one department of the whole of the west side of the mountains, based on a depot in Fraser River which 'appears to be formed by nature as the grand communication from the Coast with all the Establishments on This Side the Mountain'.

This approach to the mouth of the Fraser was balanced, for Simpson, by Indian report of the course and source of the river. The existing route to New Caledonia was 'the most tedious harassing and expensive transport in the Indian country', but Iroquois report described a route which, in only ten days' travel, would take the outfits from Boat Encampment on the Columbia up Canoe River to its source in the Rockies near Cranberry Lake, which was a source of Fraser River. So, down that river, the brigades might easily reach the coast. Simpson also thought that such a use of the Fraser would lead to a re-deployment of effort in Thompson River District. Here, with the main post at Kamloops and with Okanagan as a subsidiary, an officer and eighteen men were employed; but the returns barely paid the salaries. Simpson intended that when the mouth of the

Fraser was opened as a depot a post at the Forks of Thompson River (or perhaps even higher up) could be established to replace Kamloops, and the district could be supplied more cheaply and more efficiently.

The mixture of Simpson's logic and McMillan's factual report was too much for the Committee, who told Canning that they intended to set up permanent posts at the mouth of the Fraser in 1826, and who in fact ordered Simpson to carry out this policy. Simpson, in the meantime, had tempered much of his rash confidence in the Fraser during the winter which he had spent at Fort George and during his journey back to Red River, with his ears ever open for fur-trade gossip, Indian reports, and above all for talk of routes and rivers. The Fraser River incident illustrates Simpson's approach to his tasks, for much of his strength and much of his weakness lay in the forceful way in which he took what he thought was an accepted and inevitable policy and then ranged (and often twisted) his knowledge to support that policy and make it appear not only necessary but desirable in itself. So in 1824 he thought that government would enforce the abandonment of the Columbia, and he put up a case against the Columbia and for the Fraser which could only have been refuted by telling him he did not know the facts (which was true). But when he arrived in England in January 1826 he sensed that the government was anxious to find a good case against withdrawal from the Columbia. So when he had been put in touch with Addington and had been given a set of questions with the request that his answers should be 'as concise as is consistent with perfect perspicuity', he replied as experience had modified his views, but also as he thought government required. The trade of the Columbia, he said, was still in its infancy but (evading the question as to the annual *profits*) it produced furs to the value of between thirty and forty thousand pounds a year. These returns came in about equal parts from the north and from the south of the river, but the hunting grounds immediately to the north were exhausted, the furs there came from the 'back Country', and this 'back Country' was not well connected to the coast owing to the difficulties of the rivers, while communication by land from the coast to the northern interior was impracticable owing to the mountains and the dense forest.

The Columbia, said Simpson in 1826, was therefore the only known route to the interior from the coast. Fraser River was not as large as the Columbia, and not to be compared for purposes of trade. At its mouth there was but three feet depth of water, its banks were high,

steep and heavily wooded, and any ground on which a post might perhaps be built always seemed in danger of floods. Moreover, about seventy miles from the sea the Fraser was interrupted by rapids and falls, about a hundred and fifty miles up it became impossible to use poles, paddles or even towing-lines, to stem the current; and although the Indians were anxious to have posts, and had always behaved well, Simpson thought they were so numerous that a post would need sixty to seventy officers and men. The Fraser, categorically, did not afford a communication by which the interior could be supplied, nor could it be depended on as an outlet for the furs of the interior. Unasked, Simpson volunteered the view that 'if the Navigation of the Columbia is not free to the Hudsons Bay Company, and that the Territory to the Northward of it is not secured to them, they must abandon and curtail their trade in some parts, and probably be constrained to relinquish it on the West side of the Rocky Mountains altogether'.

This was the latter-day wisdom of 1825 and 1826. It had not entirely convinced the Committee, who in 1826 were approving proposals to attach New Caledonia to the Columbia Department, were ordering Fraser River to be established as soon as possible under the command of McMillan, and were hoping it would become the principal depot. There were slight reservations against too full a commitment to the Fraser until the character of the river had been fully ascertained, but nothing like the condemnation of the river which Simpson had given to Addington. Simpson, in the meantime, had given much of his attention during the winter 1824-5, which he spent on the Columbia, to plans for transferring the main depot to a spot which would probably remain British even if American claims were fully acknowledged.

As he had travelled westwards across the continent in 1824 Simpson had heard a report that the Americans proposed to establish a colony at the mouth of the Columbia. He had suggested an 'arrangement' by which the Company would relinquish the coast, and the trade west of the Rockies would be partitioned. The Governor and Committee had ordered the abandonment of Fort George since it had been formally restored to the Americans in 1818, and since it lay south of the Columbia; and whatever their views on the Columbia trade in general (to which they both became more and more attracted in the course of the winter) neither Simpson nor McLoughlin questioned the wisdom of giving up the old post. Simpson, indeed, at one stage pursued the idea of abandoning the coast (and the costly separate shipment of goods from England) to

the point of declaring that if the Company went no further west than Fort Nez Percés the coastal Indians would then bring their furs inland to trade them. This was a rash statement even for Simpson, and was based upon the high costs of the Columbia posts, regardless of whether the Americans moved in to contest the trade or not. In more sober mood, and facing the fact that the Committee had ordered the abandonment of Fort George in deference to the wishes of Canning, Simpson decided against the post. It was a large pile of buildings, well stockaded and protected, and covering about an acre of ground; there were about a hundred and fifty inhabitants, many of them old Canadian *voyageurs* or Iroquois who bid up the price of food, and whom Simpson immediately wanted to reduce in numbers and to send back to Canada; and the whole establishment had about it an air of grandeur and consequence which Simpson found out of place in a fur-trading post. It should be destroyed, not handed over to the Americans as a going concern, for that would do us great harm in the eyes of the Indians.

For Simpson the search for an alternative site was fairly simple, for between the mouth of the river and Belle Vue Point there was no ground fit for an establishment on the north side of the river, since the banks were throughout either high perpendicular rocks or low points which were liable to flooding. Belle Vue was about seventy-five miles from the mouth, which seemed a considerable distance, but Simpson argued that all the trade of Fort George came through the support of three chiefs—Concomely, chief of the Chinooks at Point George, Cassino, chief of a tribe settled near Belle Vue, and Schannaway, the Cowlitz chief—and that all three of them would remain loyal. So, reckoning that his new post was not meant to be more than a secondary establishment (since he intended the main depot to be in Fraser River) Simpson thought that the distance from the harbour was not a serious defect and was outweighed by the other advantages.

Belle Vue was rightly named 'Jolie Prairie' by the Canadians, for it was an admirable situation for a farm, both for cattle and for grain, and by the time he left the Columbia, in March 1825, Simpson could report that already a herd of hogs, and forty head of cattle, were flourishing there, and at that distance from the blighting damp of the sea air he expected to be able to raise all the corn which would be needed for shipping and for the coasting trade. But within a few years the unhealthy state of the new post, its liability to 'intermittent fever' (malaria) and its distance from the sea, were to count against it. In 1824-5, however, all was confident enthusiasm. The buildings

were set up during the winter, and in March 1825 Simpson, on his way east, took McLoughlin and placed him in formal command of the new post, which he christened (with a bottle of rum broken on the flagstaff) as Fort Vancouver. The name was chosen to identify the English claim to the region with the discovery of the river and of the coast by Vancouver, and Simpson (not knowing the current state of the diplomatic play) reflected that 'If the Honble Committee however do not approve the Name it can be altered'.

The Committee in due course reported the removal to Canning, adding that it was in response to Canning's wish, but that Simpson's first-hand opinion was that the Columbia was the only navigable river which offered a route to the interior and that possession of Fort Vancouver and assurance of the right to navigate the Columbia were essential if the Company was to retain the trade of the upper river. For Simpson the new post had become merely one of the attractions of the Columbia Department. But the new post was beautifully situated and well designed, in two years he was certain it would be the finest place in North America, and if situated within a hundred miles of London it would be worth more than the whole Columbia trade. The Columbia trade as a whole had fired Simpson's imagination, and as he went back eastwards he was working at the possibility of devoting his attention to the department, either by accompanying the furs to Canton, or by spending the whole of the season 1826-7 west of the mountains, or by spending two or three winters there. He saw the Columbia trade as a valuable means of keeping up the returns in furs while the over-wrought eastern districts recuperated, and he anticipated handsome returns if the department were extended and re-organised. He felt 'a peculiar interest in the business of this side of the mountain', even to the extent of saying that he would gladly stake his livelihood on it. But Simpson nevertheless made the best of his way eastwards, and left the Columbia Department under command of John McLoughlin. He did indeed feel that to carry his projects into full effect he ought himself to spend at least one more winter on the Columbia, but in the meantime he had transferred all the valuable property to the new post, and had handed over authority to the Chief Factor.

There is no clear account of the relations between Simpson and McLoughlin at this time and during their winter spent together. Certainly, since both men were realists, there was much which each must respect in the other. But there was never much cordiality, or even sympathy, between the gaunt angular McLoughlin and the shrewd, opinionated, and plausible Simpson. Their future was to

reveal their incompatibility, but in 1825 McLoughlin took over the Columbia Department with a will, and as he transferred the Company's interests to the north bank of the river he wrote 'remember Gentlemen we ought to get all we can from the south side of the Columbia while it is in our power'.

McLoughlin was not alone in this determination that along with long-term plans to develop the trade north of the Columbia should go plans to exploit trade from south of the river. In the territories east of the mountains, which had been exhausted of furs during the struggle with the North West Company, the policy of recuperation and conservation was taking shape, and this was a policy which the Committee had itself advocated. The Committee had also advocated the corollary: unless the trade was to suffer from such a 'nursing policy', returns must be increased 'by keeping all the frontier country hunted close, and by trapping expeditions in those countries likely to fall within the Boundary of the United States'. Pointing up the instructions of the Committee and the resolves of Council in a way typical of the manner in which he carried out his tasks, Simpson in 1826 told McLoughlin that a strong trapping expedition was to go to the southward of the Columbia, 'as while we have access thereto it is in our interest to reap all the advantage we can for ourselves, and leave it in as bad a state as possible for our successors'.

The agreed policy was to 'scour the country wherever Beaver can be found' to the south of the river. Simpson in 1826 thought that such expeditions could be called Snake Expeditions, Umpqua Expeditions, or by any other name which seemed suitable; the important thing was that they should get the beaver and that they should exhaust the furs of the country. In the spring of 1825, both he and McLoughlin had particularly in mind the Snake Country expedition of Peter Skene Ogden, and McLoughlin was to continue inland from Fort Vancouver to meet Ogden as he came out from the Snake Country to Fort Nez Percés, to re-equip him and send him back to the Snake Country once more.

Simpson and the Council of the Northern Department had fully determined to get the utmost from the Snake Country, despite Indian hostility and American opposition. To make good the strength which had been depleted by battles with the Blackfeet under Bourdon, Finan McDonald and Alexander Ross (the desertions to the Americans from Ross's party were not yet known), extra men had been ascribed to the Columbia Department in 1824. Making a detour to Spokane House on his way across to the Columbia, Simpson had taken a strong hand in the re-organisation

of the Snake Country expeditions, which were organised from that post. Endless arguments could be marshalled to demonstrate the folly of the expeditions returning to the Flathead post in November and lying idle there through the winter months; but no arguments were needed—that was the sort of conclusion at which Simpson arrived almost by instinct. The Snake Country expeditions were in future to winter out. Moreover, since the freemen and the Iroquois who formed so large a proportion of the expeditions were 'the very scum of the country and generally outcasts from the Service for misconduct', Simpson decided that they needed a strong hand, so he had ordered Ross back to Red River and had agreed that Ogden should leave Spokane House and his superintendence of the whole district and should go straight to the Flathead post, meet Ross as he came out from the Snake Country, and take command himself. Ogden was to reinforce the expedition by fifteen of the Company's regular servants and some thirty or forty extra horses, and his party was not only to winter in the Snake Country but was then to make its way out, in summer 1825, by way of the Umpqua and Willamette rivers, to Fort George. The decision to transfer the business of Fort George to Fort Vancouver must have entailed some modification in this plan, but the whole notion was based upon the mistaken idea that the Umpqua rose in Utah, and though Simpson had written to Ogden in the course of the winter to urge him to come out to the coast by that route, and Ogden fully intended to do so, it would in any case have been almost impossible.

Ogden's decision not to come out to the coast was, however, not dictated by geographical considerations, for at the time he was as ignorant as anyone else about the course of the Umpqua. He had agreed with Simpson that the future outfit-point for the Snake Country expeditions should be Fort Nez Perces (Walla Walla) rather than the Flathead post; there horses could be bought cheap, transport costs would be saved, the distance to the hunting grounds would be less, and the build-up of the post would help to subdue the unruly Nez Perce Indians. So, when his difficulties made him decide that the journey to the coast was impossible, it was to Fort Nez Perces that he turned. The difficulties culminated in the decision that his party was too small and too weak to attempt the journey to the coast. This may seem strange in view of his strength. With twenty-five Iroquois and freemen he had a party of about a hundred and twenty, including women and children. When William Kittson replaced Thomas Dears as second-in-command to Ogden he added much to the strength. Perhaps petulant, and short of education

according to Simpson's notions, Kittson had behind him a career of commissioned service in the Canadian Voltigeurs followed by experience in the North West Company; he spoke Kootenay and several other Indian dialects, was a good man of business, and would face any danger. He left a sketch map and a journal which help materially to clarify the wanderings of Ogden's party and to emphasise the reasons why Ogden had decided to come out to Fort Nez Perces instead of to the coast.

Even with Kittson to support him, and his own reputation to maintain, Ogden found his party difficult to manage. Though the Blackfeet hovered round the party, stole horses and drove back small parties who were sent out to hunt or reconnoitre, the freemen resented any camp discipline. When Ogden had worked his way from the Flathead post by way of Fort Nez Perces, Bitterroot River and Gibbon Pass to the headwaters of the Missouri and buffalo country, his freemen were in their element, running the buffalo as the party went south and south-east by way of Big Hole River. He was at this stage upon American territory, where not even the Convention of 1818 gave him any right of access; and when the Governor and Committee knew of this they expressed their alarm. But all previous Snake Country expeditions had committed a similar trespass as they crossed the Continental Divide going eastwards from the Flathead post towards the Snake Country, and Ogden was not worried. His troubles were that, despite expectations, beaver were scarce, the winter in the mountains was an infinitely more severe trial than had been expected, he knew little about the country, and his freemen were even more troublesome than he had thought possible.

When he had moved south-east and south, past 'the boiling fountain' (at Jackson, Montana) to 'the Horse Plains', the Blackfeet stole twenty-six of the horses, many of them buffalo-runners; but even this did not bring the freemen to heel. A turn westwards brought the party across the Height of Land by Lemhi Pass, 'an awful looking place', to a fine plain with buffalo in hundreds, and here Ogden paused to recruit his horses before moving south-east up the North Fork of Salmon River in the hope of crossing the mountains and dropping down, at last, on to Snake River. The freemen over-ruled Ogden when he wanted to go east and north in the hope of beaver, but it took from 11th February to 24th March before any serious move up the river could be made, and by that time Ogden was apprehensive. When a day's climb took him over the mountains, on to Day's River, and so to grassy plains 'Covered with Buffalo',

where 'all the comforts of life were found', he found the freemen as hard to move as ever, and it was with great difficulty that he got them to Snake River Plains by 1st April. Another week on the plains, held by snow and slush, and they were on Snake River itself at last.

Here the party dispersed to hunt beaver; but first they ran into a war-party of Blood Indians who killed one man and took several horses and traps, and then, as they trapped up Blackfoot River, running east-south-east from its junction with the Snake, they impinged on an American trapping party. Ogden's own journal is not as clear and explicit about the Americans as it might be, but Kittson's journal makes it clear that as early as 29th December Ogden had been joined by seven Americans who wanted the protection of the large British party, and who stayed with Ogden till he was working his way south-east towards the Snake River from Lemhi Pass. Ogden gives the date of their departure as 8th April, Kittson as 19th March; but since Ogden was bogged down by his freemen for most of the interval the dates are not vital. What mattered was that when Ogden got his party moving again the Americans were ahead of him. They had no supply system to support them, but Ogden had traded some tobacco and ammunition with them. This would be for their own use, not for trade with Indians, but Ogden had traded hard, and although they had travelled so long with the British party the rivalry was acute. When, therefore, Ogden found the Americans ahead of him as he trapped up Blackfoot River, he decided that he must outpace them and get in front at all costs, and that his party must 'annoy them as much as we possibly Can'.

The Americans whom Ogden had thus met were no chance collection of disorganised trappers. Led by Jedediah S. Smith, they were attached to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company which General William H. Ashley had founded at St. Louis in 1822. Ashley's expeditions up the Missouri were marked by hostile encounters with Indians which produced, in two short trading seasons, a death-roll and military intervention on a scale quite unknown north of the border; but during the autumn of 1823 his parties had penetrated to the Green River valley, and probably to that of Great Salt Lake, and in spring 1824 Jedediah Smith, one of Ashley's officers, had crossed to the headwaters of Snake River. Here he fell in with a dozen trappers, detached from Ross's party outfitted by the Hudson's Bay Company. They had been robbed by a war-party of Snake Indians, but they had furs *en cache*, and Smith got their furs from them in a bargain which ended in his leading them north to rejoin Ross and

even accompanying them on to the Flathead post and, under the protest that he in his turn might be robbed by the Snakes, spending the winter there.

So Jedediah Smith had done exactly what Simpson most feared on the frontier; he had followed home the Company's expedition and had observed the Company's trade from within. Ross's expedition had been used as a means for 'opening a road for the Americans'. Moreover, in 1822 several trappers had deserted from Ross's party, with their furs, to the posts on the Yellowstone and Big Horn Rivers which had been set up by Ashley's partner, Andrew Henry. Smith was at the Yellowstone post in 1822, and could well have been concerned in this trade with Ross's deserters; he almost certainly knew about it, even if he was not a participant. Smith had a reputation for being one of the outstandingly moral men in the fur trade, distinguished 'in combining with the most ardent belief in, and practice of, the Christian religion, an undaunted courage, fierce and impetuous nature, and untiring energy'. But to the Hudson's Bay men he was merely 'a sly cunning Yankee' who had seduced Ross's hunters (it was alleged with rum) into parting with furs for which Ross had outfitted them.

With this background, Ogden had no compunction about the high prices for which he sold his tobacco and ammunition to the Americans. But the two parties were in such open rivalry that no excuse for Ogden is needed; openly trying to outstrip each other, they hunted up Blackfoot River and then back, to turn westwards to Portneuf River and so to Bear River. Here a party of about twenty-five Americans had spent the winter, and they roused Ogden to self-righteous (and quite unjustified) wrath by their close trapping. 'They are a Selfish Set they leave nothing for their Friends we act differently', wrote Ogden and, when he had worked his way down Bear River and crossed into the Utah country of Mexico to the vicinity of the Great Salt Lake, he found himself in a country 'over-run with Americans and Canadians'. At this stage his trappers brought in two of the freemen who had previously deserted from Ross, and from the deserters and his own men Ogden was able to fill out a picture in which Great Salt Lake, Colorado River and the Umpqua, all fell into place.

Such knowledge was of little value in helping Ogden to decide where the frontier with America lay, and when another deserter brought in a party of fifteen Canadians and Spaniards, to be followed by twenty-five Americans and fourteen of his own 'absent men', the problem of the frontier assumed real importance, for the

American leader Johnson Gardner immediately told Ogden's men that they were on United States territory and that they all, freemen and engaged men alike, were entirely free. Gardner added that he would buy any beaver and would sell goods cheap, and next day he told Ogden he was on territory which had been allocated to the United States, and must withdraw. Ogden asserted that they were on land which was still awaiting allocation; but in fact both Ogden and Gardner were wrong, for Ogden had moved south across the forty-second parallel and Gardner had moved west across the Continental Divide. They were on Mexican territory, since they were south of the forty-second parallel.

Their mistakes mattered little, for each acted in the conviction that he was right, and they were on the frontier of the fur trade. Ogden could not keep his disgruntled and ill-disciplined freemen and Iroquois in hand when faced by competition for their furs. The Company's high tariffs and strict accountancy were unacceptable, and though he sturdily countered bluster and terrorisation, and prevented attempts to steal his horses, Ogden could not hold his men. Only two of the 'deserters' paid their debts as they went; they took their furs with them, and with his party reduced to twenty men Ogden decided that he was too weak to follow Snake River to Fort Nez Percés as he had originally been instructed. Instead, anxious to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Americans, he followed the river north-east to Henry's Fork. Here he met letters from Simpson which urged him to come out to Fort George by way of the Umpqua. This also he felt too weak to attempt, and it was to a clear failure in his encounter with Gardner that his decision not to attempt the journey out to the coast must be ascribed.

His further wanderings took Ogden north and north-east, up Henry's Fork to the foot of the Continental Divide and then west and north-west, over Monida Pass to the headwaters of the Missouri and on to American territory once more. He was steadily building up his catch of beaver, and he had also met and had traded with a large band of Piegans and of Blood Indians who were accompanied by some freemen from Fort des Prairies on the Saskatchewan; their professed intention was to trade at the Flathead post, but they might sell their furs to any American party which they met. Working his way across the 'many forks of the Missouri', down Red Rock River and so by way of Big Hole River and the Boiling Fountain, and across the mountains and back once more to Oregon territory, Ogden's policy was to trap close, regardless of the future, and so his returns piled up. But his men always had the chance of desertion. In

the buffalo country of the Missouri they dawdled; when Ogden sent Kittson back to the Flathead post by way of Bitterroot River in July they needed 'threats and entreaties' to prevent them all from going with him, and when Ogden had got them back over the mountains, moving north and catching many beaver in sweltering weather up Clark Fork, they defied his orders and took their own route. Even the masterful Ogden was forced to note that 'I did not think it good policy to use any threats towards them in Case of our meeting again with Americans but if God spares my life until the Fall an example Shall Certainly be made of some of them'.

News that the American trappers were also in difficulties, short of supplies and with steady losses of horses to the Blackfeet, gave Ogden little encouragement as he turned south and once more crossed the Continental Divide to the headwaters of the Missouri at the end of August, on American territory again. He was in despair of ever reaching the Columbia, and convinced that any further Snake Country expeditions must be wasted effort in the face of American competition, and he had written to tell Simpson his conclusion. Yet he derived great comfort when he received a packet of letters, including one from McLoughlin, leaving entirely to Ogden the decision whether he should come out from the Snake Country to Walla Walla (Fort Nez Perces) or to the Flathead post and Spokane. Ogden's conclusion that he could not come out by way of the Umpqua was accepted, but not his opinion that the Snake Country must be left to the Americans. On the contrary, the difficulties of trapping through the winter were made of little account and McLoughlin insisted that, whichever route he took to bring out his furs, Ogden must immediately re-equip his party and must return so as to be on the hunting-ground in time to get winter beaver. His pleasure at learning that his friends fared well, and that Kittson had safely reached Spokane House, only sharpened Ogden's bitterness at the difficulties of his task; he alone was doomed to this 'unfortunate, Cursed Country, I wish to God', he added, 'all these Villains were burning in Hell if there be such a place'.

He had decided to come out to Walla Walla, and had even got his freemen to agree on this course. But it was October before he had got enough food for the journey—achieved by yet a third journey south by Big Hole River, over Monida Pass and into the Snake Plains. Then he struck west, travelling north of the Snake by way of Goddin's River and River Malade to Boise River, Payette River and the main Snake River, the south branch of the Columbia. He could have followed the Snake downstream to Walla Walla, but Ogden

broke off north-west after only one day by the Snake and, travelling across country, reached Walla Walla in the first week of November.

Simpson found his plans dislocated by Ogden's revelation that it was not possible to come from the Snake Country to the coast by way of the Umpqua; but he was determined that the Snake expeditions must continue. Ogden brought out about four thousand skins, and since he had encouraged his men to trap close many of them were poor and small, so that this was a poor reward for the great hardships of the expedition and for its endless travel. But, as against the estimate that the whole trade north of the Columbia only produced six thousand six hundred skins, Simpson estimated that with the five thousand skins which he reckoned the Americans had 'pillaged' from Ogden the Snake Country could make good profits. Even if no profits could be made the Snake Country must still be worked—'if it but cleared its expenses we should not consider it good policy to abandon it as the more we impoverish the country the less likelihood is there of our being assailed by opposition'.

McLoughlin fully accepted the policy set out by Simpson, and was himself at Walla Walla to meet Ogden and to send him off again. The basic policy of contesting the frontier therefore settled the issue. Indeed, McLoughlin had already sent off a party, under the former Northwester Finan McDonald and his own stepson Thomas McKay, to work eastwards from the Willamette and trap in southern Oregon. They had found no beaver at Klamath Lake in southern Oregon and had moved over to eastern Oregon by the time Ogden caught up with them in mid-December. The winter was even more bitter than that of 1824-5, but Ogden had been hardened by that experience, and though his freemen were reduced to eating their horses and to stealing beaver-meat from each other, he pushed them south-east to Deschutes River, then north and east, over the Height of Land, to drop down to Burnt River and so down that river to the Snake. Then, as he followed the Snake eastwards, he found food so scarce that he was forced to split his party, and by mid-March, when he had just begun to recruit his party with the abundance of the plains near Shoshone Falls, he dreaded an encounter with a party of Americans and Iroquois who were also in that area. 'I have no doubt our hunts are damned', he wrote, remembering the desertions of the previous year.

But, when at last the Americans stumbled upon his camp on 9th April, Ogden jauntily noted that they were more surprised than he was, and this second encounter proved a magnificent vindication for the Company and its frontier policy. This American party had no

such forceful leader as Gardner had been in the previous year, but they thought that his experience then would have scared Ogden, and they had not treated his deserters so as to make them loyal at this second encounter. Ogden was therefore delighted to find that the deserters were tired of their new masters, no further desertions were threatened, and the renegades even began to make their peace by paying some of the debt which they owed. It was a notable moral victory, for the great defect in the previous year had been the freemen's feeling that they were abused and exploited by the Company. When the conditions offered by the Americans proved no better after all, the Company could contest the frontier without fear of desertions; but Ogden noted that the change in conduct was partly due to the fact that most of his men were now engaged servants instead of freemen.

Ogden's second expedition was a great success in other ways too. His beaver was clean and in good condition, and he brought out three thousand eight hundred beaver and otter (the official figures were a little over two thousand but the profit was still handsome), which yielded, as he reckoned, a profit of £2,500. Then, having brought his men out to Walla Walla (Fort Nez Percés) Ogden handed over command to Finan McDonald and himself set out across country for the Willamette. After nineteen days in the mountains he reached that river and so dropped down to Fort Vancouver. He crossed the mountains in July, using the route by which Finan McDonald had come up to Walla Walla, and he was able to report that the road was passable for laden horses only for about a week in September; in July he found an average depth of seven feet of snow. Still, he was very well pleased and was confident that if the freemen were better treated and given better prices, and if the parties were strong enough to defy the Indians, great quantities of beaver could be got from the Snake Country. He knew that the Americans also were in difficulties and that the Snake Indians seemed determined to destroy and annoy the Americans whenever possible; and when he had exchanged views with McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver he set forth in good heart on his third expedition of 1826-7.

Ogden's subsequent expeditions fully vindicated his views and the Company's policy, for whereas in his first expedition he had suffered defeat in the desertion of his freemen, in his second venture he had held his own and seen his men stand by him, and in his third expedition he met no Americans. But in his fourth trip, in 1827-8, when he met the Americans he was able to appraise their weaknesses and to gain a substantial victory.

The weaknesses which Ogden had noted in the Company's Snake expeditions had been substantially remedied by 1828. A large proportion of his men were contracted servants instead of the freemen whom he had led in 1824. His hold was therefore surer, in addition to which he was acting with experience and with rising confidence. His notes against exploitation of the freemen had also been heeded. The Council of the Northern Department had decided in 1825 that all freemen, half-breed or Iroquois trappers, should be treated on the same terms as Indians. This involved the freemen in payment for goods at two hundred per cent. advance on the inventory prices of the Columbia Department; and the Columbia Department was charged a seventy per cent. advance on prime costs as against $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. advance charged at York and Moose. McLoughlin thought a fifty per cent. advance would cover the extra costs of transport, but he got no remedy until 1829, when the Columbia shipments were put on the same basis as those to Moose and York, at $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. advance. In the meantime, convinced that high prices were largely the cause of Ogden's troubles, and able for the first time to analyse the finances of the Snake expeditions (as distinct from those of Spokane District) when Ogden brought out his returns in 1825, and when the first journals of the expedition arrived at Fort Vancouver, McLoughlin had acted upon his conviction that high prices had alienated the freemen and had on his own responsibility instructed Ogden in 1826 to allow the freemen to buy reasonable necessities (up to £15) at the same prices as European servants, to sell them their hunting implements at inventory prices, and to pay them ten shillings for a full-grown beaver—a price which was less than the American offer but which satisfied the freemen and was accepted by Ogden, McLoughlin, the Committee, and even by Simpson. These prices accepted the basic conditions that 'if we have to compete for trade the cheapest shop will ultimately carry the day', and that the Company could afford to pay as good a price as the Americans and must, indeed, pay something more. Simpson and the Council of the Northern Department got something of a reprimand in the admission that 'By attempting to make such expeditions too profitable the whole may be lost'. Simpson characteristically admitted that he now knew the old system was bad; and Ogden reaped the benefit of the change of heart.

McLoughlin showed his independence and his competence in other ways besides modifying the range of prices for the freemen. Simpson was ready to consider Ogden's encounter with Gardner on American territory (as he supposed) as an error of judgment which

was only atoned for by Ogden's zeal, and the Committee thought it a grave error that he should have extended his journey into the territory of the United States. But McLoughlin explained that Ogden had every right to be where he was when the desertions took place, and though in 1826 he was not over-confident about the future of the Snake expeditions he defended Ogden and left him a free hand to decide when to return in 1827. He was to go with a party of thirty-five to Silvies River, explore it, and then swing west and come out in the Klamath territory; and he passed the winter in central and southern Oregon. He found the Indians friendly, and though beaver were scarce he brought his furs out to Fort Vancouver in August 1827 in time for them to be shipped straight back to London. It had been yet another desperately hard winter, sleeping out in pouring rain with no blankets, wading through freezing water and often going hungry. 'A convict at Botany Bay is a gentleman at ease compared to my trappers' wrote Ogden. But his parties were taking on a character of their own. His men were almost happy in their privations; a roving life suited them, they would choose no other, and their womenfolk were beginning to take a pride in cleaning and preparing the skins. Moreover McLoughlin himself had passed to a mood in which he had decided that the Snake furs were the cheapest got in the Columbia Department, and his confidence in Ogden always considerable, had risen further. 'Freemen in the plains with their families starving about them are not easily led', a trapping party was the most difficult and dangerous charge in the whole business, and but for Ogden the expedition would surely have failed.

It was as well that Ogden was in good heart and in control of a coherent and contented party when he set off on his fourth expedition in September 1827, for he found the Americans in constant attendance. But close acquaintance merely increased Ogden's confidence. He found that the tough approach of Gardner was not approved by all the Americans, that by comparison with his own trappers they were idle, and even ready to gamble away their furs, and that they were poorly equipped and supplied. Anxious to return across the mountains to Great Salt Lake, they traded beaver to Ogden to get snow-shoes for the journey, and food and tobacco in the meantime. He even managed to accept a couple of American deserters and to take the furs which they owed to Jedediah Smith and his associates in return for the debts which had been owed by his own deserters in 1825. Ogden lost all fear of American competition unless they should come into the Snake Country supplied with spirits, and although his party was attacked by Blackfeet warriors

and had two men killed, he came out to Fort Vancouver in July 1828 in fine fettle with his best returns to date; some of his old deserters had rejoined him, and some of his furs had been traded from American trappers and had their mark on them.

Logical analysis made the Snake Country expeditions in 1828 the decisive factor in the Company's trade, for the Columbia Department was the source from which the Committee hoped to get furs while the Northern and Southern Departments recuperated. Within the Columbia Department, the Snake Country was confidently expected to produce the majority of the furs, and it was moreover the frontier area in which a policy of extermination was to be pursued. In fact the Snake expeditions produced reasonable profits—£3,000 in 1825, £2,000 in 1826 and £2,500 in 1827—and these were profits got from a keenly contested trade with no suspicion of a protective monopoly. It is indeed true that the ruthless plan 'to hunt as bare as possible all the Country South of the Columbia and West of the Mountains' gave the Company larger returns than could otherwise have been got. But the Americans also were hunting improvidently, and they were ready to carry on their opposition regardless of strict territorial claims. So McLoughlin warned his traders that the Americans threatened to come to the Flathead post and to the Kootenay (as they had told Ogden they intended); and when in 1826–7 Ogden's party was drawn off to the south, Simpson noted that much of the trade of the Flathead post was taken by the Americans. The need for a frontier-guard policy was all the more emphasised when bands of Piegans who would otherwise have taken their trade to Edmonton (perhaps those whom Ogden had met) fell in with Americans and were persuaded to part with their furs.

Ashley himself had made his fortune and retired from the fur trade in 1826. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company, however, continued under the management of his able and vigorous lieutenants, Jedediah Smith, David Jackson and William Sublette, and Ashley acted as their agent and outfitter at St. Louis. He was not quite done with active trading, and the wealth which he and his successors quickly amassed not only provoked and financed further fur trading expeditions but stimulated American people and politicians. Ashley came to be regarded as an authority on western questions. He later became an influential Congressman, but even before then his opinion was respected, and American claims could no more be ignored than could their commercial rivalry. The Company, in consequence, had to win its returns from the Snake Country in the face of an active opposition, backed by considerable political strength. McLoughlin

therefore instructed John Work (in command at Spokane) that if the Americans came to the Flathead country the trade must be secured even to the point of 'spoiling' the Indians by giving as good prices as the Americans. But profits also must be watched, and since the decision on the frontier might well leave the Company in possession it was important neither to acknowledge American pretensions nor to get the Indians into habits from which they would ultimately have to be broken. Black at Walla Walla was instructed in March 1828 that American territorial claims must be resisted, though if they came only in the way of trade he was to treat them civilly.

The conjunction of Samuel Black at Walla Walla with Ogden in the Snake Country must have reminded the more thoughtful members of the Company of the days of competition with the Northwesters, and in truth the position was not dissimilar, for the essence of the problem was competitive trade, and sturdy individualists were necessary. The Company was able to put into the field as effective a band of traders as ever the North West Company had been able to muster, and the close supervision of Simpson and the Committee counted for much too.

McLoughlin and Ogden in particular showed at their best when the courage and hardihood which they had revealed in their Northwester days were controlled and harnessed by Simpson's system. So did Samuel Black, whose riotous misbehaviour had made him even less acceptable to Simpson than Ogden, but who had also been given an assignment in which his courage and endurance were of the greatest value. His command of the 1824 expedition to explore 'Finlay's Branch' of the Peace River was long disputed and attributed to John Finlay, but his journal has recently been authenticated, edited and published. Simpson expected the undertaking to be dangerous and the hardships and privations to be forbidding. Black's party was small—only Donald Manson as clerk and six men—and much depended on his 'enterprising character'. He proved to have unexpected capacity not only to face hardships himself but to hold his party to its task (not without some desertions), to make the necessary decisions, and to work out his position. Though, by the time he had got back to Peace River on 29th September, 1824, Black had (in Simpson's estimation) 'made no discovery of importance', he had been through as rugged a country as ever was passed through, and the negative result of his journey was in itself of value for it revealed that the area which he had covered was neither rich enough in furs nor peopled with Indians adequately to repay trading expeditions. This verdict applied to his journey up the Rocky

Mountain trench by the 'Lower Finlay', round the terrific Big Bend of the Finlay to the uplands of the Cassiar Mountains where Stikine River, Finlay River and the southern headwaters of the Liard River, all rise. Here he turned back from 'River Turnagain', a northward-flowing stream which would have led him to the Liard and so to the Mackenzie; but he had not only revealed the poverty of the region and of the Indians; he had also revealed that the primitive Sekani and Thloadinni Indians were in touch with Russian traders on the coast through a system which lay in the hands of the 'trading Nahannies' of Stikine River, who in their turn got the guns, knives and kettles of their trade, from the Tlinkits of the coast.

After wintering at Dunvegan, Black went out to York in 1825 and was then ordered to join the Columbia Department. He was meant to go to Fort Colville, but McLoughlin sent him instead to Walla Walla, and there Black was responsible for persuading McLoughlin in 1826 to disobey the Committee's instructions of that year, to remove the post to the north bank of the river. Here again, the logic of opposition prevailed. The Indians must not be offended, and the post must be maintained 'whither it pays or not'.

When Black had been removed from Walla Walla to Thompson River in 1830 McLoughlin noted that the Thompson River furs were 'swarming with living animals. It is strange that these animals formerly abounded at Walla Walla and now there are none—and Thompson River which then had none at present abounds with them'. This, as McLoughlin noted, was certainly most curious, especially as the botanist David Douglas recorded that he had been driven out from Walla Walla by 'an indescribable herd of fleas'. But at the end of his tenure at Walla Walla Black had roused McLoughlin's admiration for his manner of conducting the trade there, and no criticisms had been voiced. The post was reported to be in a good state of defence (as Black would certainly have made it, with his passion for keeping small arms always to hand). Black did not venture far afield but developed into 'an indoor resider' though he maintained his interest in discovery; and although Walla Walla was a windswept, bleak and barren post, Black kept the frontier there. He 'prevented the Trade of the Interior being Spoilt', and in doing so he showed the kind of sense which was necessary to bring the rather remote control of the Company into gear with the realities of competitive trade. In 1829 he asked for a reduction in prices at Walla Walla, hoping to be allowed to use the tariff of Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin refused, since costs of transport to Walla Walla were considerable and must be added to the Fort Vancouver

prices. By the time he was transferred away from the post Black was unpopular with his Indians but he was warmly praised for the success with which he had firmly kept up the prices. Only later did his successor discover that though Black had indeed kept up the official Standard of Trade he had increased the habitual gratuities to Indians and so had achieved what he thought was essential!

Black, Ogden, and McLoughlin had merits all of their own, but they were parts of a wider band of notable traders and explorers. Kittson's value as second-in-command to Ogden in 1824-5 is apparent; it belies Simpson's description of him as 'A sharp, dapper, short tempered self sufficient petulant little fellow of very limited Education'. Perhaps nearer the mark was Simpson's estimate of Thomas McKay, son of John McLoughlin's wife by an earlier union with the Astorian Alexander McKay. Thomas had also arrived in the Columbia on Astor's *Tonquin*, and had been taken on by the North West Company and then, at the coalition, by the Hudson's Bay Company. Simpson had travelled with him and put him down as 'an excellent second where presence of mind courage and activity are required', but he thought him in need of restraint, a man of little judgment and a confirmed liar—not fit for command despite his ambition. McKay, however, was always eager for adventure, 'has always been employed on the most desperate Service in the Columbia, and the more desperate it is the more he likes it'; his name alone was a host of strength to any expedition, for he terrified the Indians, and he firmly supported Ogden from 1825 to 1828.

In 1828 McKay was employed to support not Ogden but Alexander Roderick McLeod, yet another former Northwester. With over twenty years' experience on Peace River, in Athabaska and on the Mackenzie behind him, McLeod was 'a good pedestrian, an excellent shot, a skilful Canoe Man and a Tolerably good Indian Trader'. If he seemed to Simpson to add little respectability to the fur trade as a partner, and to be illiterate, self-sufficient and arrogant, these were the defects of his qualities, and he proved to be the capable and forceful leader of several expeditions, both trapping and punitive, into the Umpqua country, up the coast from Fort Vancouver, and down into the valley of the Sacramento.

By contrast with these almost excessively robust Northwesters that 'Most excellent young Man in Every Respect', the Irishman John Work had always been an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. He had travelled over the mountains in 1823 with Ogden, had spent the winter with him at Spokane and had then gone on McMillan's expedition to explore Puget Sound and the Fraser

River. Until 1830 Work was in command at Spokane, at the Flathead post, the Kootenay post, and Fort Colville. He had taken part in 1829 in a punitive raid to the Clatsops to recover property plundered from a wrecked ship, his qualities were known and appreciated, he was in command of the Fort Colville District, and in 1830 he was appointed a Chief Trader and was given command of the Snake Country expedition of that year. He followed this up by an expedition among the Flathead and the Blackfoot Indians, and in 1832 he set out for the Sacramento Valley on an epic (but not very remunerative) journey which took him down the Sacramento to San Francisco Bay, along the coast past the Russian establishment at Ross to Cape Mendocina, then across the mountains to the Bonaventura and back to Fort Vancouver via the Willamette. His steady, painstaking, character appealed to Simpson though he found Work's appearance and manners clownish and simple almost to the point of idiocy, and there could be no doubt at all that the sterling merits of Work were fully recognised in the Columbia Department and he was a source of great strength there.

McLoughlin, in fact, led a redoubtable team. Not all his officers were of this calibre. They ranged from John Warren Dease who preceded Work in command of Fort Colville District and who had equal experience with him at the Kootenay and Flathead posts but who died of ill-health in 1830, and they included Archibald McDonald. With some background of a medical education 'little Archy' had come out in 1813 as Clerk and Agent to Lord Selkirk, conducting a typhoid-stricken party to Red River. He played a full part in the troubles of the colony and won the reputation of being devoted to Selkirk though when he had been taken on the strength of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1820 and had spent a year at Ile-à-la-Crosse he impressed Nicholas Garry as fond of intrigue. At the coalition he was sent to the Columbia as an accountant, with the reputation that he was no good as a trader. Nevertheless he was given command of Thompson River District in 1825 and he explored the route from Kamloops to the Forks of Okanagan River. He came out to York Factory in 1827 and travelled back to the Columbia (as a Chief Trader) in company with George Simpson. His journal *Peace River. A canoe voyage* is a valuable supplement to the official narrative of that journey and gives evidence of very fair literary ability; but Archy's loquacious and rather assertive affability was too much for the Governor. Deciding that his jokes had become abominably insipid and that he was 'all jaw and no work', Simpson left McDonald at Fort Langley. The shrewd, clear-headed little man,

'rather inactive and 'tis thought does not possess much nerve', with his capacity to express himself on paper, remained an element in McLoughlin's team until 1830. He was then allowed to leave by McLoughlin, who judged it 'no use to keep a Gentleman who says he will not work'.

Behind the strong corps of officers McLoughlin had a fair cross-section of servants. Many of them Simpson thought redundant; that was to be expected. Some wished to retire and to be allowed to settle west of the mountains; that raised a great problem of policy. Most of them were good or bad according as they were treated; many were devoted to the life of the trapper and trader and to the Company which organised such a life for them, and some few, such as Michel Laframboise or François Payette, were as reliable (and perhaps as open to criticism) as their officers.

Backed by the Company, organised by Simpson and stimulated by McLoughlin, the officers and men of the Columbia Department had the strength to worry any opposition. And the Americans had defects enough to make them yield ground to far less competent opponents. In fact the expedition of 1828 into the Umpqua country by McKay and McLeod was due to a complete and disastrous failure by the Americans. In 1826 Jedediah Smith had set off from near Great Salt Lake with a party of fifteen men, south-west to the Colorado, then west to reach San Diego, having crossed the waste lands of Southern California. Here he got into trouble with the Spanish authorities but he returned north-west by a route parallel to the coast, trapping through the winter until in May 1827 he was foiled by the deep snows of the Sierra Nevada mountains in an effort to get back to his rendezvous near Salt Lake. He left most of his party in California and himself reached the rendezvous with only two men in mid-June. This was travelling and exploring of a very high order, and when he set out again with eighteen men to bring in the rest of his party all promised well.

But since Smith had passed through their territories in the previous summer the Mojave Indians had been fired to opposition by Spanish travellers, and they killed ten of Smith's men and took all their goods. Smith reached Spanish territory after a journey of the greatest hardship and, leaving his wounded men, set off to join his original party. Here, however, he met endless opposition from the Spanish authorities, who seized his Indian guides and even his wounded men, threw Smith himself into prison, and eventually sent him to Monterey, the seat of the governor. It was November 1827 before he was set free, and he was then denied power to recruit his

party, he was given two months in which to leave Spanish territory, and his route was set out for him. But he found the Sacramento River too high to cross and decided to winter in the neighbourhood with his party of eighteen—he had left Monterey with twenty, but two had deserted.

Then, in April 1828, Smith set out north-west, reached the coast and turned north till he came to the Umpqua. Here he suffered his second disaster at the hands of the Indians, for while he was away reconnoitring for a road his camp was attacked, fifteen of his men were killed and only three escaped, and all his furs were plundered. One of the survivors made his way to the Willamette and so to Fort Vancouver, and Smith brought the other two with him on 10th August.

The trouble had apparently arisen over an axe which had been pilfered and for which Smith had punished the Indians; his party had also killed a couple of Indians in earlier brushes with them. The Americans were certainly travelling with furs, and with guns, ammunition and supplies, which were highly desirable, and perhaps the Indian attack needs no further explanation. But McLoughlin noted that the Indians assumed that the Americans were different from the Hudson's Bay men and might therefore be attacked with impunity. From this to a suspicion that the Company connived at such attacks, and was even responsible for Indian hostility to Americans, was but a short step. But McLoughlin thought that the affair had harmed the trade as a whole, and that the ease with which the Umpqua Indians had overcome Smith's party would lead to many such incidents and diminish security everywhere. Simpson wrote a version in which he turned the narrative against the Americans, saying that Smith had told the Indians that they were enemies of the Hudson's Bay men and would drive them from the Columbia. Therefore, said Simpson, the Indians thought they could attack the Americans, and the occasion was provided when an American tried to force an Indian woman into his tent. But even Simpson fully approved of the action which McLoughlin took.

Alexander Roderick McLeod had already taken a trapping party along the coast to the south of Fort Vancouver in 1826 and had reached the Umpqua River. Then in 1827 he had gone on a coastal expedition by ship to the north and in November (partly with the object of providing employment for the surplus men who were hanging round Fort Vancouver) he had gone further south, seeking a great river reputed to abound in beaver. In early summer 1828 he was again sent north, this time to avenge the murder of a Hudson's

Bay party—for the Americans were not alone in finding the west coast Indians treacherous and suspicious.

The active and experienced clerk Alexander McKenzie had been sent in December 1827 with four companions to deliver a packet of letters to Fort Langley, the post which had been set up on Fraser River. He delivered his letters, and started back early in January 1828, but was surprised and murdered by the Clallum Indians of Hood Canal, who had been friendly to him on his outward journey and whom he appears to have trusted completely. Rumour ran that the corpses were even eaten, and certainly some element of ritual dancing and celebration was present; but an Indian woman who was with McKenzie's party was alive and in captivity when news of the murder reached McLoughlin. Without wanting to embark on a programme of hostility to the Indians, McLoughlin felt that this was a deliberate act of defiance and that if it were not avenged the Company's men would be placed in the gravest danger, since they were so heavily outnumbered. Nothing but the dread of retaliation, said McLoughlin, would ever restrain these barbarians from such outrages.

McLeod was therefore sent off, in March, on a carefully planned punitive expedition. The offers of other Indian tribes were refused, since McLoughlin had no wish to stir up wars among them, and friendly though they seemed they were all, from Fort Vancouver to the northern end of Vancouver Island, refused any further supplies of powder or of ball. The first plan was to sail the expedition to the village in Hood Canal in the *Eagle*, an imposing vessel which would have impressed the Indians. But that ship was merely under orders to sail to the Columbia and to return to London, and McLoughlin was chary of interfering with his ships' captains. So McLeod marched overland by way of Puget Sound while the smaller and less effective *Cadboro* went round by sea. The combined approach succeeded, and McLeod killed eight Indians in a chance encounter. But the remainder retreated to a strong village and began to draw out negotiations from which it appeared very likely that treachery would emerge, and the captured Indian woman would be harmed. So McLeod 'finding no good to result from forbearance', landed his men under cover of the ship's cannon, and burned the village complete, including forty-six canoes. Twenty-one Indians were killed, two villages were destroyed (for McLeod went back and burned another village at Port Townsend), and not a man of McLeod's party suffered injury. The lesson proved salutary, for the woman was given up and the relations of those killed by the English ex-

ecuted two of those who had murdered McKenzie. Cynically—but he knew his Indians—McLoughlin thought they would be more affected by the loss of their canoes and other property than by the loss of life.

With so recent a call to avenge murder of whites by Indians lest 'others by seeing them unpunished would have imitated their example', McLoughlin could not pass over Smith's disaster. McLeod was at hand, ready to start with a band of freemen, trapping towards Umpqua River. He was instructed to take in the site of the assault on Smith's party in his route, to recover as much of the loot as possible and to punish the outrage 'if found practicable and considered expedient'. Smith, despite his ordeal, offered to accompany McLeod's expedition and in fact did so, but although McLeod recovered some seven to eight hundred beaver and otter skins, forty horses and miscellaneous other goods, he did not punish the Umpqua Indians. He called them to a council and learned that the Americans were generally reputed to be 'Enemies destroying all the Natives that came within their reach', that they had given themselves out as hostile to the Hudson's Bay Company, and that they had ill-treated some members of the tribe which committed the massacre. Many of the plundered horses had been killed and eaten, and many furs were irrecoverable, but McLeod thought that the Indians' story bore the smell of truth, though Smith denied much of it; and McLeod also thought that taking lives would have involved the Company in eternal warfare with a numerous and powerful tribe with whom the Company had always been on good terms and in whose hands the safety of any future expedition must lie. So he thought it prudent to abstain from violence.

Though Simpson reckoned that this intervention had cost the Company the hunt of McLeod's expedition for a season, the balance seemed favourable, for Smith sold his furs to the Company and, instead of going to Salt Lake to start another expedition, remained through the winter in the Columbia and then went out to Red River, and so to St. Louis. The bad quality of his furs, and the defects of his men, were mercilessly pointed out to him, and the Hudson's Bay men made it quite clear that the weaknesses of the Americans were fully appreciated.

Moreover Smith was not the only one of Ashley's successors to have come to grief. During the winter, 1827-8, two American groups had hunted their way to within a short distance of the Flat-head post. Jackson was a partner of Smith's, but the other party, under a Major Joshua Pilcher, was independent. Their hunts had

been meagre and the two parties were in opposition to each other, but both were forced to trade most of their furs to the Hudson's Bay post for supplies, and Pilcher (whose previous venture in the Missouri Fur Company had crashed in 1825) was even reduced to offering his services to the British Company. Unctuously Simpson rejected Pilcher's offer, since the Company could not use the services of an American citizen to poach furs from American territory. But this was mere play-acting; Simpson had no use for Pilcher because he was convinced that opposition in the Snake Country was over for the time being.

McLeod, somehow, does not seem to have won approval although his actual handling of the situation was fully endorsed. But Ogden had won great praise by his expeditions, and the weaknesses of the Americans had been mercilessly exposed. The country south of the river, thought Simpson, had been heavily worked and almost exhausted. It would still provide occupation for thirty or forty men for several years to come. But the opposition was beaten; the frontier policy had paid.

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CHAPTER XXIII

DEVELOPMENT IN THE COLUMBIA

Simpson, in the Columbia Department again in 1828, was available to deal with repercussions of the Smith massacre and to drive a hard bargain with the American. His second journey to the Pacific Coast was due to the vivid acceptance of the possibilities and of the importance of the Columbia trade. His plan to return to the Pacific Coast in 1826, after his visit to England and his dealings with the British government on the subject, had necessarily been postponed since the Committee had withdrawn William Williams and had made Simpson Governor of both the Northern and the Southern Departments. He had therefore been forced to put the Southern Department in order, and had been further held up by the floods at Red River. But his fresh views and information, which both the Company's Committee and the government accepted with respect, helped to harden the British attitude. So concentration on the trade of New Caledonia, with the right to use the Columbia as a highway (and a rising suspicion that the Fraser would not serve this purpose) entailed rejection of American proposals that the boundary should be fixed at the 49th parallel, or indeed of any proposal which did not give access to the territory between the Columbia and the 49th parallel.

With Simpson to brief him, Governor Pelly submitted an historical and geographical *aide-memoire* to Canning, pressing the Company's case for a boundary which would run south from latitude 49° at the Rockies to the Snake River and so would leave the Company free to use both the Columbia and the Snake. Simpson himself was directly questioned by under-secretary H. U. Addington; his view was that 'if the Navigation of the Columbia is not free to the Hudson's Bay Company, and that the Territory to the Northward of it is not secured to them, they must abandon and curtail the Trade in some parts, and probably be constrained to relinquish it on the west side of the Rocky Mountains altogether'.

Neither Canning as Foreign Secretary nor the rest of the Tory cabinet were likely to grieve over-much at the Company's possible loss of trade. But in 1822 there were rumours that American settlement might be expected on the Columbia, and in 1825 Pelly had approached government with a report that Congress was debating the

boundary and that an American map delineated the 49th parallel as the boundary all the way westward to the ocean. This, noted Canning, was a very important paper, and whatever their views on the Company and its trade, ministers were attentive to the Company's views and Canning had Pelly's letter before him when he drafted a memorandum on British policy for Lord Liverpool. Here direct intercourse with China (when the East India Company's monopoly should have lapsed) was considered as part of an immense trade which would spring from the boundless British establishments on the north-west coast, and a firm claim for a frontier which would give access to the Columbia as a highway seemed essential. Convinced in his own mind, and urged by the Company, Canning had re-opened negotiations with the Americans in 1826: but the discussions between Albert Gallatin on the one hand and Huskisson and Addington on the other came to no clear conclusion. Huskisson in his turn used the Company to get his historical background straight, and he seems to have been inept rather than indifferent as a negotiator. He did, however, leave upon the Americans the impression that Great Britain was disposed to let Oregon 'gradually and silently slide into the hands of the United States'. With such an impression in their minds the Americans were not likely to yield, and the best which could be achieved in August 1827 was an extension of the 1818 agreement for joint occupation. This time the agreement was to run indefinitely, subject to a year's notice.

From the point at which negotiations broke down, and the Convention of August 1827 gave joint occupation a new lease of life, 'a new vigor pervades the correspondence of the London Committee and of Governor Simpson'. Whereas in 1824 part of his task had been to remove Fort George on the assumption that the Columbia would become the boundary, and the value of the Columbia Department as a whole was in doubt, in 1828 Simpson was told that his object must be to secure as ample an occupation of the country as possible, to the south of the river as well as to the north. True, the hold to be won south of the river was a pawn to be sacrificed (perhaps) later in order to acquire trade on the northern side; and the Committee, with good reason, was not very hopeful about the China market. But the readiness to abandon posts was gone. In fact, Indian trouble had delayed the complete abandonment of Fort George in the summer of 1825, and the Committee had, in anticipation and not knowing of it, approved of Samuel Black's delay in moving the post at Walla Walla to the north of the river. No longer was it necessary to impress the British government with the

Company's willingness to abandon the trade south of the Columbia. But the basic situation remained the same; the trade which the Company hoped to secure was trade north of the river. New Caledonia, the coastal trade, and Fraser River, were the focal problems which Simpson was to investigate in 1828-9.

For this the rival was less the United States than Russia. True, individual American ships were trading on the coast, and their captains were to prove tough opponents. But the United States had no claim to this area. The Russian American Company, on the other hand, was both closely organised in a way in which the Americans were not, and it represented clear territorial claims in a way in which the American shippers did not. The Russian Company had been granted a monopoly of the trade on the coast north of 55° in 1799 and was also then empowered to extend southwards into any unoccupied territory. That Company exercised governmental authority over its territories and was in its turn controlled by a government department. From 1819 onwards, when its charter was renewed, the chief manager of the Company, and several of its officials, had to be officers in the Russian Navy. Such arrangements easily led to over-organisation of the trade, but from 1799 to 1818 the Russian Company was given a keen and active approach by its chief manager, Alexander Baranoff, who was responsible for the building of a Russian post at Sitka and its rebuilding, in 1804, as New Archangel. He also pushed far south and built Fort Ross on Bodega Bay in 1812. Fort Ross was meant to be a part of Baranoff's wide plan for extension of Russian power into the Pacific, but it was also to be a centre for the Russian fur trade and a source of goods for that trade. Here the Russian interest was primarily in sea-otters and fur seals, and the chief rivals were the highly individualistic American ships' captains, who traded rifles, ammunition and rum, and who contributed noticeably to the dangers of trading on the north-west coast.

In 1808, and again in 1810, the Russians had tried to make an arrangement by which Americans should trade only with them, not direct with the Indians; but, when it became apparent that Russian claims would extend down the coast as far as the Columbia, no agreement could be reached. Though the Russian government forbade access to the coast down to latitude 51° (and to the coast of north-east Asia) to all non-Russian commercial ships by the 'sweeping and absurd Ukase' of September 1821 (as Simpson called it) American ships continued to trade as before, and the Hudson's Bay Company also took up the challenge. In fact the chief result of the

Ukase seems to have been to cut off the Russian posts from their food supplies and to stimulate Simpson to an active policy. Eventually, in 1824, the Russians were forced by necessity to allow American traders to come to New Archangel.

In the meantime the Hudson's Bay Company had followed up the pioneer voyage which Ignace Giasson had made into New Caledonia from Peace River during the last phase of the struggle with the North West Company, had taken over the newly-established Fort Alexandria on Fraser River in 1821, and had devoted much attention to that river as a means of access to New Caledonia. The North West Company had had no posts which conflicted with the Russian claims; the Russians confined their trade to the coast while the Northwesters drew their returns from the interior. They were cut off from the coast not only by the mountains but also by the Indians—'of a bold and Warlike character, Friendly yet irritable and easily roused, when they are capable of acts of the most savage ferocity'. But the Hudson's Bay Company's interest in the Fraser River carried the possibility of a change in direction of the trade-route which would bring the British on to the coast, and this just at a time when the Russian Ukase of September 1821 was raising the question of territorial rights and was also challenging accepted doctrines of maritime law in that it forbade non-Russian ships to approach within a hundred Italian miles of the coast.

The commercial and maritime implications of the Russian action first roused the British government, and the possible claims of the Hudson's Bay Company only came late into consideration—though once accepted they were strenuously pressed. Russia could not stand out against the combined protests of the British and the American governments; her territorial claims called forth the declaration from President Monroe, of September 1823, that the American continents were not henceforth to be considered as subjects for future colonisation by European powers—and this forecast of the Monroe Doctrine was accepted at St. Petersburg. At the same time British claims were accepted; British and American subjects alike were allowed access to all the inland waters of the Russian possessions in America, both for trading and for fishing; but, though Russians were given similar rights of access to American and British territories, areas which were actually settled were exempt in all cases. The Russian colony of Ross was conveniently overlooked, but the Russian boundary was settled at $54^{\circ} 40' \text{ N.}$ and the English were guaranteed against future discrimination by being granted most-favoured-nation status for ten years.

Against the Russo-American convention of April 1824 and the Anglo-Russian convention of February 1825 the Russian Company protested in vain. The outcome was to allow access to their coast and to their inland waters, and to emphasise the importance of actual settlement. This aspect had been foreseen by the Hudson's Bay Committee. In February 1822 they had told Simpson of the Russian claim to a boundary at 51° and had told him to extend the Company's posts as far as was practicable to the west and north from Fraser River. 'It is probable', they added, 'that the British Government would support us in the possession of the country, which may be occupied by trading posts', and Simpson passed on this view, verbatim, to John Dugald Cameron as Chief Factor in the Columbia. The rivalry was as yet scarcely a trading rivalry, for the Hudson's Bay Company had little hold on the Columbia trade in 1822. New Caledonia was run by a mere handful of men and though John Stuart explored north and west, and William Brown set up Fort Kilmaurs in the Babine Country in 1822 and was instructed to explore and to extend trade, little was achieved. The China market, too, was largely unknown, and the Russian trade in seals and sea-otters conflicted but little with a trade in which beaver still predominated. Indeed in 1822 the Company was still engaged, according to the time-honoured pattern of its trade, in shipping specially selected beaver (and some otters) to St. Petersburg. Primarily the issue was a territorial one; the Company hoped much from the trade of New Caledonia, and access to that area from the coast seemed an essential condition of success.

This was a point of view which Simpson emphasised on his 1824-5 visit to the Columbia. The Russian trade he thought highly vulnerable, dependent only on force of arms and 'such cruel and arbitrary methods towards the natives as we could not reconcile ourselves to'; and he urged that the Russian claims to the coast should not be recognised by government. But close as had been the liaison between the Governor J. H. Pelly and Canning during the negotiations with Russia, the Company had never put forward a claim for free navigation on the coast. Yet, when the point had been conceded to the Americans, it was granted also to the British. The Company had sought access to the interior, not access to the coast, and it was only when the right lay within their grasp that the Committee contemplated a new policy in which coastal shipping would play an important part. Simpson therefore came to the Columbia in 1828 still anxious for New Caledonia, and for the Fraser as a route to that territory. But he was also concerned to make the most of the

coastal route which had been presented to him, largely by the importunities of the Americans.

Though it had made no claim to the coastal trade, the Committee of the Company had, in 1824, realised with some complacency that the arrangement with the Russians gave access to the coast east of the 139th degree of longitude, and Pelly and the Committee were allowed to peruse the dispatches between Canning and Sir Charles Bagot, Ambassador to Russia. They suggested modifications, they had seven months' fore-knowledge of the Treaty of February 1825, and they were very well pleased with the outcome, as they had every right to be.

This opening had come before Simpson's first visit to the Columbia, and Simpson's enthusiasm for the Fraser River had been in part due to the Committee's instruction that trade should be extended along the coast to the northwards. In July 1824 a special ship, the *William and Ann*, was on its way to the Columbia so that, in anticipation that the Treaty would give exclusive rights on the coast as far north as Portland Canal, with the right to ship goods from any place between Portland Canal and Mount Elias, she might trade up the coast. She might perhaps go as far north even as Sitka, and she was at least to see whether there was any good roadstead or harbour in Portland Canal, or between it and the Columbia. Simpson, with his knack of re-echoing the feelings of the Governor and Committee, wrote to Colville in August of that year (a 'letter of undigested ideas' which he knew the Northern Department would think he was mad to entertain) that he had advised in favour of a ship surveying from the mouth of the Columbia to the Fraser; and in due course the *William and Ann* arrived in the Columbia in April 1825.

The *William and Ann* had made a difficult passage, her cargo was wet and damaged, and she had to be substantially repaired before she could be sent off in July, with Alexander McKenzie aboard to report on the trading prospects. But Captain Henry Hanwell, Junior, whose first command this was, found navigation on the coast difficult and dangerous. He only went as far as Observatory Inlet and up de Fuca Strait, to the mouth of Fraser River, and though he had been instructed to give McKenzie all chances of making contacts with Indians he made very few stops on the coast. His orders were to return to England, and neither McLoughlin nor any of his traders had power to over-ride a captain's orders on the management of his vessel. Simpson and McLoughlin agreed in condemnation of Hanwell; but yet McLoughlin got some ideas on the coasting trade and he also got some insight into the methods of the American

coasting traders. On both counts he thought that Hanwell could easily have been much more valuable, for he had taken no advantage of his chances to trade, and when he met the American brig *Owhyhee* he had allowed Captain Kelly aboard his own ship but had neglected an invitation to go aboard the American which would have given him a full insight into methods, goods, standards and success. Yet at second-hand, from Kelly's reported comments, McLoughlin deduced that the coasting trade could be made a profitable business: he knew that six American ships were engaged in it, and though Kelly tried to pretend that prices were ruinous McLoughlin knew that the standard varied from place to place, that Kelly had sixteen hundred sea-otters aboard, and that he had done well enough to run his own supply ship and to be on his way out to Boston.

McLoughlin reasoned that, since the American ships had but this one outlet for their trade, if challenged they must trade cheap and exhaust themselves. The outcome, he thought, must be a substantial improvement for the Company if a market could be secured for sea-otters, and if the ships' captains could be made to accept the realities of the coasting trade. But the East India restrictions operated against the Company and granted to the Americans what was in effect a premium on the China market; and his disappointment with Captain Hanwell reached its climax when he discovered that the captain traded spirits to the Indians.

The coastal trade was very much in McLoughlin's mind during the period between Simpson's first two visits to the Columbia. He realised from Captain Kelly's remarks that Nass was a great centre of trade, and therefore probably the outlet for a water communication with the interior, and he accepted the need to have a year's supplies in hand at Fort Vancouver in case of accident, and the need to be well supplied with ships and well staffed with responsible ships' captains. For finding a route to the hinterland McLoughlin rightly advocated the Philip Turnor technique of exploring down-river from the headwaters of the Thompson and the Fraser, and for shipping he launched the thirty-ton *Broughton* in 1826 and also built the sixty-ton *Vancouver*. The *Broughton*, within the limits of her size, which kept her largely to work in the Columbia, proved a useful vessel. But the *Vancouver* was held up by bad decking, and like so many of the Company's ships on the Pacific coast she was to prove an endless source of trouble until she was finally wrecked in 1834.

For goods, ships and captains, McLoughlin was dependent upon England. But the *Dryad* arrived only on 1st June, 1826, so late in the year that the brigades for the interior had to be delayed. Her

captain, James Davidson, had an unenviable reputation as a grog drinker and had already drawn some typically sarcastic comment from Simpson, but McLoughlin found him helpful and even enthusiastic, and he helped materially to get the little *Broughton* rigged and to sea. The year nevertheless passed, of necessity, without any move in the coastal trade. But in November the Governor's relative, Lieutenant Æmilius Simpson, R.N., arrived at Fort Vancouver, ready to take command of a special ship which had been ordered from England for the coastal trade. Æmilius, a step-son of the Mary Simpson, sister of George Simpson's father, who had brought up young George in the household of the Dingwall schoolmaster whom she had married, had behind him ten years' service in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, and was accepted as a competent surveyor and navigator when he entered the Company's service in 1826. He arrived at Fort Vancouver from England via Red River Settlement (where he was utilised to survey the international boundary at Pembina), and York Factory. Even so, he arrived ahead of his ship, the *Cadboro*, which did not reach the Columbia until May 1827 and did not get to an anchorage before 8th June.

McLoughlin in 1827 was still deeply concerned with the need to establish a post at the mouth of Fraser River, for which a ship, to transport building materials and stores and to overawe the Indians, was essential. Henry Hanwell, Junior, still in command of the *William and Ann*, which had arrived in company with the *Cadboro*, was still unwilling to accept McLoughlin's wishes, as he had been in 1824; and McLoughlin was still unable to influence a man who took his stand upon his orders from the Committee, and would not exceed them. So Æmilius Simpson was first employed to chart the Columbia River from Cape Disappointment up to Fort Vancouver, and then he and the *Cadboro* were diverted from the coastal trade to help found Fort Langley, Fraser River. Chief Trader McMillan, who had surveyed the river at Simpson's orders, travelled overland from Fort Vancouver by way of the Cowlitz and Puget Sound with three clerks and twenty-one men for the new post, and the ship waited in Fraser River until he had its stockade up and the bastions and a store built. McLoughlin soon reported that the *Cadboro* was too small and too easily boarded to be of any great value in the coastal trade, where some of the larger canoes carried forty or fifty men and had more freeboard than the schooner, but although the Fraser River Indians were reported to be savage, treacherous and numerous, the small schooner gave adequate protection while the post was being built.

Then, in accordance with his instructions from McLoughlin,

Æmilius Simpson left McMillan in September and made his way up the Gulf of Georgia. It was a brief voyage of only about a fortnight, which brought the *Cadboro* back to the Columbia before the end of September. Æmilius Simpson had already shewn that he would be much more co-operative, and alive to the needs of the fur trade, than the normal ship's captain—and since he was entered in the Company as a clerk and soon became a Chief Trader with a share in profits his interest was indeed a lively one. McLoughlin, pestered beyond endurance by the drunken, unco-operative, and inefficient captains of the ships, hoped much from Simpson and considered it important that he should be taught a thorough understanding of the trade and of the correct way to treat Indians. So although Simpson's voyage up the coast was brief and unproductive McLoughlin was neither surprised nor disappointed. He had expected little in the way of exploration, but he had sent the experienced Chief Trader A. R. McLeod with Simpson so as to educate him in the fur trade.

McLoughlin was in fact too short of goods in 1827 to have been able to set up Fort Langley and also to outfit the *Cadboro* for a trading voyage. So, to make the best use of ship and captain during the winter months, he sent them on a voyage to Monterey, to collect all possible information about the trade of California, find out what contacts the Americans and the Russians had made, what price salmon would sell for, and whether deals would sell in Oahu. He was also to get a cargo of salt, butter and salt provisions, and (optimistically) he was instructed to collect the old debts of the North West Company so as to pay for these goods. Though he failed in this he got useful and encouraging information about the prospects of trade in salmon and in deals, and he brought a cargo of salt and of salt beef which was most welcome to McLoughlin. The original plan had been that, on his return from Monterey, Simpson should take provisions to Fort Langley and should then spend the summer in the coastal trade. But after a call at Fort Langley he was detached to take part in the expedition to avenge the murder of McKenzie. Then followed a second visit to Fort Langley, this time with the outfit for the year and, in July, a trading voyage to the northward. The Americans were already ahead of Simpson, and he got but little trade; but he went on to the frontier of British claims, anxious to get a knowledge of the business of the coast rather than to embark prematurely on an expensive opposition.

Æmilius Simpson's report on the coastal trade, as he saw it in 1828, has not survived in the Company's archives; but as the Governor summarised it, it provided a great stimulus for the Com-

pany to commit itself firmly, and especially for the Company to make some arrangement with the Russians. The two Simpsons reported that the trade was not as vast as had been supposed; the Americans got only about six hundred sea-otters a year and about six thousand beaver and land-otters, the land furs mostly brought to the port of Nass, at the entrance of Nass (or Simpson) River, from the northern inland regions of New Caledonia. At Nass the Indians were numerous and hostile, and though the Americans were on reasonable terms with them (so much so that a half-breed population was already growing up), even the Americans were exceedingly cautious, preferred never to venture into port with only a single ship, and kept boarding nets and other defences always ready. Their ships were manned largely by Sandwich Islanders, and though they sometimes wintered on the coast they normally spent the winter in a voyage to the Sandwich Islands, or else they left the coast at the end of the summer, took their furs to Canton and then took a cargo of Chinese luxuries back to the States.

George Simpson allowed his indignation to be roused by reports that the Americans traded largely in slaves, who were sold to the northern tribes for furs. More easily substantiated was his statement that the Americans traded spirits, guns and ammunition, in such quantities as to add greatly to the dangers of the trade. This was the commonplace of fur-trade rivalry, and the Company could provide no remedy save the old and simple one of 'better pennyworths'. The stimulating novelty was the realisation that the coastal trade was made worth-while not by the seals and sea-otters of the coast but that 'it is the Land Skins of our interior Country, that renders it at all worth following'.

From this George Simpson concluded that the Company could only secure the coastal trade by a strong and permanent post at Nass. This would intercept all the land-skins, and since the sea-skins formed a small proportion of the trade a few years of 'animated opposition' should soon drive the Americans from the coast altogether. He hoped that Nass River might provide a communication with the interior—a point which he had very much in mind since, apart from the possibility of Nass River, he knew of no route south of the Russian boundary except the Columbia, British access to which was still only temporarily secured. This was a conclusion at which he had only recently arrived; but he had reached it by personal experience—'from my own knowledge of Frasers River, I can positively say, that it never can be made a communication adapted for the purposes of inland transport'.

Simpson's evidence and influence had certainly played their part, in 1826, in leading the British government to the breakdown in negotiations with the United States for a partition of the Oregon territory and the indefinite renewal of the 1818 arrangement for joint occupancy. The *impasse* on the north-west boundary had taken some time—twenty-one conferences after Simpson had left London in 1826—and during that time Simpson had travelled so incessantly as to earn from the Secretary of the Company an official rebuke for reckless exposure of his life, and the promise of a private 'jobation' from his good friend and supporter the Deputy Governor. But the renewal of the Joint Occupation agreement gave the Company a new approach, and Simpson set off on his second journey to the Columbia at one o'clock on the morning of 12th July, 1828, having concluded his 'counselling business' only the previous evening. Notwithstanding the Committee's friendly censure, he proposed to take a more than ordinarily dangerous route, for the Committee was anxious to secure the coast trade before the Americans developed any greater strength, and Simpson was convinced that it was necessary, both for immediate development and to enable the Company to speak with confidence, that Thompson River and Fraser River should both be explored (travelling downstream) by himself as he went westwards. He intended both to assess the capacity of New Caledonia and to find a route which would open up that territory and would put the developments in coastal shipping into contact with the furs of the northern interior.

Simpson, therefore, having spent twenty-nine days stemming the current of Peace River to arrive at McLeod Lake, crossed the Divide to Stuart Lake, one of the sources of the Fraser, on which stood Fort St. James, headquarters of New Caledonia District. Here he met Chief Factor William Connolly, newly arrived from Fort Vancouver (a journey which had taken from 23rd July to 17th September) and with him he reviewed the situation and the communications of New Caledonia District, with its six posts at McLeod Lake, Stuart Lake, Fraser Lake, Alexandria, Babine Lake and Connolly Lake. The district as it stood in 1828 seemed to Simpson to shew every sign of good management, but to suffer from poverty and bad communications. Fish was the mainstay of the diet, supplemented by an occasional berry cake or by a dog-feast (dog was considered a delicacy), summer frosts were so frequent that agriculture offered no remedy, and 'the situation of our New Caledonia Friends in regard to the good things of this Life, is any thing but enviable'. Alexandria, on Fraser River about three hundred miles south from Stuart Lake,

was something of an exception, for there the soil was rich and it was reckoned one of the best posts in the Indian country. There, too, the Indians were friendly, and although the country was not rich in furs this was because of its natural poverty and not because it had been closely trapped and needed recuperation.

Even to Simpson's optimistic eye the possibilities of the trade of New Caledonia were limited. As he saw it, the returns were worth about £12,000 a year, the costs stood at about £3,000 and the profits at about £9,000. This was handsome enough, and Simpson did not anticipate driving the profits up above about £10,000 to £12,000 a year 'beyond which, it cannot materially rise, as its Trade does not appear to me, capable, of further extension'. His serious interest lay in the new trade which might be brought in. In particular he hoped that the trade of Fraser Lake might be increased by recuperation and by new furs from the mountainous country between Fraser Lake and the coast, and that Babine Post might provide a very considerable increase. Geographical knowledge was still uncertain, but Simpson knew from Samuel Black's journey up Finlay River that the uplands of the Cassiar Mountains were barren and that such trade as existed found its way to the coast by way of the Nahanni Indians of Stikine River. He thought a possible route might lie through Babine River to the ocean at Observatory Inlet (whereas Nass River would more properly fit this description); and though there was reason to think that the Babine Country, like that which Black had explored, was exceedingly mountainous and poor in furs, Simpson thought the trade would increase as the demand for European goods became more constant. In similar vein, he hoped to open a trade with Indians who had as yet had no dealings with whites, with the Sekani who frequented Connolly Lake, and with the Chilcotin tribe west of Alexandria.

Simpson did not expect any great rewards from these territories, and he accepted the difficulties. Constantly he bore in mind the twin problems of discovering a route to the coast and of projecting the New Caledonia trade northwards so as to tap the furs which went down to the Russian posts. After passing the district in review with Connolly, he decided, in order finally to ascertain the practicability of the Fraser as a route to the interior, to run that river and also Thompson River. From Stuart Lake to Alexandria he found the Fraser safe and tolerably good, the current strong with abundance of water, the rapids short and negotiable, if numerous. At Alexandria he split his party, so that J. M. Yale continued down the main stream to the forks of Thompson and Fraser rivers while Simpson

himself took horse to Kamloops—a journey which took him eight very pleasant days.

Kamloops, or Thompson River Post, proved to be a poor establishment in a country not rich in beaver or small furs. It was mainly kept up so as to protect the New Caledonia brigades as they came up from Vancouver, to Okanagan by boat and then by horse to Kamloops. Here again Simpson hoped to improve the trade by opening up new country to the north-west, but he spent only two days at Kamloops before setting out down the river, plunging from one rapid to another with considerable danger till he came to the Forks and met Yale. As a route for the supply of New Caledonia, should the Columbia be given up to the Americans, Thompson River had to be written off. But the Fraser was even more of a disappointment. For the three hundred miles from Alexandria down to the Forks, Yale's report of the navigation was not too unfavourable although the current was dangerous as the vast mass of water rushed through its narrow and rocky channel. But from the Forks to the ocean the river completely changed character. Every new reach brought fresh dangers and often there was no chance to land and assess the problem before the canoes were swept into the rapids, as the river foamed into its rock-walled course, with whirlpools and boulders in the stream and no refuge possible on the banks. Simpson's own description of his two-days' journey down the Fraser Canyon is brief and factual, but even he was convinced that the passage down would be certain death in nine cases out of ten, and that the passage upstream would be quite impossible. He soberly concluded that 'Fraser River, can no longer be thought of as a practicable communication with the interior', and in his disappointment he paid his tribute to John Stuart and Simon Fraser and the great accomplishment of their journey down the Fraser in 1808. His companion Archibald McDonald left in his Journal far more detail than Simpson, as he did of the passage of Thompson River and most of the journey. But he adds little to the vivid realisation of the dangers of the route, either for boats or canoes (and Simpson's party consisted of one boat and two canoes). The Columbia must remain the normal supply-route for the interior, and coastal shipping must bring to Fort Vancouver the furs from the unexplored and undeveloped lands to the north.

The Fraser had brought Simpson down to Fort Langley, which had been established only in 1827, and his original intention had been to retrace his course up the Fraser to the Forks, then to go across country to Okanagan and so down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver. According to his own journal he only gave up this plan

when the state of the Fraser River route left him no choice. But Connolly already knew of the change before Simpson had left Fort St. James—a fact which makes one suspect that Simpson already knew the dangers of the Fraser before he committed himself to that perilous journey. His decision, whenever he took it, was to go by sea from Fort Langley to Vancouver, and with two specially built boats he made the journey, without incident, by way of Puget Sound and the Cowlitz Portage. He burned his boats as he crossed from Puget Sound to the Columbia, to prevent them falling into the hands of Indians, and he finished his journey, 'the longest Voyage ever attempted in North America in one Season, about 7,000 Miles', by canoe on 25th October.

His journey had confirmed the approach to his problems with which Simpson had started. Fort Langley had been established to act as a depot if Fort Vancouver should ever be abandoned, and McLoughlin had carried the idea even further with the suggestion that the whole of the interior of Columbia as well as New Caledonia should be outfitted there. This Simpson rejected completely in 1828, and justified the post solely on the secondary ground that it would be a means of securing a share in the coasting trade. Hopes for a Fraser River route were dead; hopes for Fort Langley lay in a reduction in costs as Indian hostility dwindled, and in an increasing share in the trade of Vancouver Island and of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, much of which went to the American shippers.

The same increasing emphasis on coastal trade and on shipping is to be seen in Simpson's whole approach to the Columbia Department. His report ran through a rapid review of the posts. First came Fort Colville, with its outposts at the Flathead Post and Kootenay inextricably bound up with the Snake expeditions. Well managed, but hampered by American opposition and with little chance of expanding its trade, Fort Colville was promising in that the Flathead Post would benefit as Americans realised that opposition in the Snake Country 'would turn out a losing Trade, and are not therefore likely to embark in it'. Okanagan, down-river from Colville House, was only justifiable as a transport station for New Caledonia; and Fort Nez Percés at the junction of Walla Walla River and the Columbia (near the mouth of the South Branch of the Columbia, or Lewis and Clark's River, or Snake River), was also badly situated for fur production but was kept up to secure the route to the Snake Country.

The Snake expeditions themselves seemed to Simpson to have gone far towards the achievement of their object. Ogden received

the warmest praise, and though A. R. McLeod had not fulfilled his promise Simpson was sure that, prolix though his report might seem, 'it would appear that there is a probability of our being relieved from Opposition in the Snake Country for a time'. The boundaries of the Snake Country Simpson took as running from the Rockies in the east to 'a chain of mountains running nearly parallel with the Coast on the West'; on the north he took the 46th parallel from the Rockies till it struck the South Branch of the Columbia, and to the south he let it run right to the Rio Colorado. The expeditions were to range as far to the south and west as beaver could be found, and where the rights of the Mexican Republic might happen to be involved 'we follow the example of the Spanish functionaries on the Coast, and our opponents from the United States, by making no enquiries about them'. He expected the expedition under McLeod to trap down as far as San Francisco and Sacramento River, and he expected Ogden to get substantial returns back in time for shipment in 1829. Though the Snake Country was seriously exhausted he thought it could provide employment for thirty or forty men for many years, that it would stave off American rivalry, and that it would contribute substantially to the returns of the Columbia Department.

This last expectation was important, for although it was accepted that it would be good policy to maintain the Snake expeditions as long as they defrayed their costs—and perhaps even if they did not—yet the posts on the Columbia were so meagre in their returns that the Snake expeditions were the chief source of profits. Even Fort Vancouver produced less furs than old Fort George had done, and Simpson ascribed this to the virtual extinction of fur-bearing animals. He firmly prophesied that even greater decline was inevitable, and defended the post at Fort Vancouver on the ground that it had become the centre of a successful farming establishment which provided subsistence for itself and would soon provide farm produce for other purposes.

But Simpson well knew that he was on the defensive. He might indeed declare that the changes of system and of management had wrought marvels, but he knew that the fur-traders assembled in Council, and looking to their share of the profits of the trade, would take the returns of the department as the only valid check, and he insisted therefore that the Columbia had never been a rich fur country and that it had been over-wrought and ruined. The accounts unfortunately placed its trade in the worst possible light since they contained about £16,000 of 'losses and charges' which had attended

the tidying-up, but had not yet begun to shew the consequences of improvements. This was special pleading in Simpson's best vein. But there was substance in the plea, and he rebutted the traders in Council by declaring that 'They seem to confine their attention exclusively, to immediate and temporary advantages; whereas we, while devoting our utmost attention, to immediate benefits, are labouring and contending for those of a permanent and more important character'. He and McLoughlin were planning to extend the trade, and so emphasised the importance of the coastal trade and of shipping.

This was but a more formal report of much which had gone before, for Simpson's first letter to London after his arrival at Fort Vancouver had been taken up with just this point. Æmilius Simpson's report had left little doubt that the Company could win command of the coastal trade, but the Governor realised that it would probably involve some years of expenditure before the returns began to pay, and he thought that the trade of the interior depended on coastal shipping and on the maintenance of a flourishing post at the mouth of Babine River, at the 'Port of Nass which is the grand mart of the Coast both for Sea Otters and Land Skins'. Such a post would need to be strong and well manned—fifty officers and men for the post itself, and fifty for the two ships which would be needed to protect and work with the land party while the post was under construction. Yet a good post at Nass would enable the Company to get the land furs from the northern parts of New Caledonia away from the Americans on the coast, and it would also enable it to settle the country east of the Russian boundary which, again, the Americans drained. Such a post, backed by well-organised shipping, should drive the Americans from the coastal trade in two or three years—and, with the Americans gone, the numerous and warlike Indians of the coast would be deprived of their chief source of arms and ammunition and the trade would become not only more lucrative but safer. This, in its ordered and logical way, was Simpson's reiteration of McLoughlin's more incoherent 'To secure our Inland trade we must endeavour to destroy competition on the Coast, as these Coasters trade with Indians who in their turn trade with the Natives of the Interior some of these get Skins annually even from the vicinity of the Babine Lake'.

There certainly was no difference between Simpson and McLoughlin about the coastal trade. Though his knowledge of Black's report and of New Caledonia and of the Babine Country had left him convinced that it was poor in furs, yet Simpson stated in his

report that the country northward of Fraser River, up to latitude 54° , was beyond all doubt valuable. This territory had been ascribed to Great Britain by the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825, and moreover the British had then been given the right of access from the coast by any river running through Russian territory. So Simpson hoped that a post at Nass would give this communication by way of Nass River (or Simpson River), and he and McLoughlin planned to set up the post in 1830.

This, however, was but a part of a comprehensive policy; with command of the coast Simpson looked northwards and southwards and inland, and saw everywhere new and vast fields which only needed 'a spirit of Enterprize' to yield rich harvests. To begin with it would be necessary to pay a high price for skins. But when the Americans had been driven from the field this could be remedied, and the Company could also take over the American function of supplying the Russians, with manufactures from the United Kingdom and with grain, beef and pork, grown at Fort Vancouver. A trade in spars and timber could also be promoted with the Sandwich Islands and on the coast as far south as Valparaiso, and since coastal trade to the northward could not be operated for more than five months of the year such shipments to the southward appeared necessary parts of the trade-pattern.

So completely logical did the picture appear that Simpson decided not to risk the delay which would ensue if he awaited London's sanction. He worked out the detail. The *Cadboro* was to collect the returns of Fort Langley when she got back from her voyage to the south. Then the *William and Ann*, and a chartered ship, ought to have arrived from England and Simpson planned to send the *Cadboro* and the *William and Ann*, the former to take the outfit for Fraser River and the latter to call on the Russians at New Archangel, after which they would investigate Nass River in combined strength and choose a site for a post there; then back to Fort Vancouver and south with cargoes of timber.

These were the complex plans which Simpson and McLoughlin laid during the winter of 1828-9, to be put into effect on their own responsibility during 1829 and 1830. They carried their planning further into 1830, asking that the brig *Eagle*, a 'strong burthensome Vessel' of almost two hundred tons, expected out from England in 1830, might be kept out for the coastal trade because her strength and the size of her hold fitted her both for timber shipments and for defence against Indians. They were only too anxious to send home the *Cadboro* (to crown her imperfections, affected with dry rot, a very

bad bargain) or the *Vancouver* whose unseasoned timbers had warped and shrunk to such an extent that she would not hold her oakum; she had not even been launched. If necessary they would even send home the *William and Ann*, and Simpson sent home his 1829 report via Red River so that it might arrive before the *Eagle* sailed, so as to ask that the annual supply ship could also be employed upon the coast while her cargo of furs was being got ready for shipment.

The 1829 report, however, came to hand in two sections, for Simpson's plans had to be modified when in March 1829 American opposition was encountered in new and vigorous form; and all of Simpson's plans were 'deranged' by the melancholy fate of the *William and Ann*. First, on 5th March, 1829, came Captain Dominis of Boston in the *Owhyhee*, with news that another American ship, the *Convoy*, was also on its way. He immediately began to trade at a tariff lower than the Company's, and Simpson had to drop his prices in competition. Then came the *Convoy*, and then Æmilius Simpson by canoe, to report that the *William and Ann* had been lost with all hands. She had arrived safely at the Sandwich Islands, together with her consort the hired barque *Ganymede*, and had there met Simpson in the *Cadboro*. But she struck on the South Spit when entering the mouth of the Columbia and was broken up by the heavy seas. Captain and crew, a mate, fourteen men and boys from England and ten Sandwich Islanders, with a further sixteen Islanders engaged for the service, had taken to the boats, but the boats had been swamped in the surf, and search-parties had set off from the *Cadboro*, from the *Convoy*, from the little post at Fort George, and later from Fort Vancouver itself.

It seemed that Captain Swan and most of his men had got safe to shore and had then been cruelly murdered by the Indians of the Clatsop village opposite Cape Disappointment. A punitive expedition was immediately planned and the Americans were asked to assist. Captain Dominis refused and would not even let his crew volunteer though, for one day only, he agreed to discontinue the sale of arms and ammunition to the Clatsops; but the village seemed so strongly held that Æmilius Simpson, in command of the operation, decided to postpone the attack till the Indians were less watchful. This is Simpson's matter-of-fact reason for postponement; McLoughlin gave as his reason a suspicion that evidence of Clatsop guilt was not clear. But since McLoughlin eventually came to the conclusion that the crew were not murdered, although some of the bodies were certainly mutilated, and contented himself with an expedition to recover the goods which the Clatsops had got from the

wreck, perhaps Simpson's earlier and less premeditated account is the more trustworthy.

The *William and Ann* had carried but a small selection of trade-goods, and the greater part of the outfit was aboard the 'large dull Sailing chartered Bark' the *Ganymede*. But Simpson reckoned that the loss of the *William and Ann* would upset the plans for coastal trade in 1829, and even the proposal to set up a post at Nass in 1830. He asked again that the *Eagle* be made over to the coastal trade and that active and interested sailors be engaged, and he pleaded for yet another ship, to replace the *William and Ann*, and for the piling up of a year's supplies in the Columbia in case such an accident should be repeated. His very worst fears were nearly realised, for the *Ganymede* almost ran aground as she came into the river, and her late arrival caused difficulty, while part of her cargo, stowed near the salt, was spoiled. And in the next year, 1830, the special additional ship which the Committee had bought at Simpson's earnest request, the *Isabella*, was also lost as she crossed the baleful bar of the Columbia. McLoughlin was certain she might have been saved had Captain Ryan and his crew remained aboard, for she took several days to break up and most of her cargo was got safe to shore. But the crew had thought she would pound to pieces and had abandoned her; and the Committee took the loss of their ship very philosophically, for she was well insured, no lives had been lost, and they hoped that her salvaged cargo would provide for the all-important coastal trade.

Despite these savage lessons in the importance of shipping and in the dangers of navigation, plans for the coastal trade went forward. Simpson had meant to injure the Americans severely by depriving them of the benefits got from trade with the Russians. He reckoned that the Russian Company traded about £3,000 to £5,000 worth of goods each year with the Americans, and he had written to the Governor of the Russian establishment before he left the coast in March 1829, and had sent his letter by Æmilius Simpson in the *Cadboro*, for despite all the shipping troubles the *Cadboro* was able to sail for the north in August. Simpson had always thought that, as against the Americans, the Russian and the English companies had long-term interests in keeping the Indians unarmed and industrious, and he now offered his friendship, cited the terms of the Treaty of February 1825, which forbade both nations to sell spirits, fire-arms, gunpowder or other warlike stores, and held out the hope that by mutual help they might each trade more cheaply. His offer was to ship out fifty to a hundred tons of goods from England for the

Russians, and to take payment in furs, in bills on St. Petersburg, or in specie, while he also offered to supply four to five thousand bushels of grain and a quantity of salt pork or beef at moderate prices. This, it is proper to note, was merely the detailed reiteration of Simpson's first reaction to the Russian Treaty of 1825.

Simpson, himself, had meant to begin discussions with the Russian governor. But Æmilius Simpson was sent to New Archangel instead. He reported, in September 1829, that the Russian governor Chirikoff was most correct in refusing sales of arms and spirits and that this posed a problem, for any infringement would alienate the Russians while it seemed hopeless to compete with the Americans except by the sale of arms and spirits. Their government supported the Russian Company, and appointed high-ranking naval officers to the service, and the post was well built and well manned while a handsome ship from Kronstadt lay in the harbour delivering supplies and loading furs. Chirikoff welcomed Simpson's overtures though he suggested that any arrangement must be made between headquarters in London and St. Petersburg; but he felt that the Russians were well supplied with goods and that any trade with the English would probably be only for provisions. Æmilius Simpson was impressed with the Russian post, and he reported about twelve ships in active commission and a workmanlike shipbuilding yard in full production, with a ship of about two hundred and eighty tons ready for launching.

The Russians, on the whole, seemed better organised than the English had expected. Their great weakness was their dependence on American ships for bringing up provisions from California, and on this hopes of a bargain rested while McLoughlin sent home a fur seal so that he could be told the value of the peltry which would be exchanged.

But, though the London Committee (with Simpson at hand in England from October 1829 onwards) took up the proposals and offered to supply the Russians regardless of profits, the Russian authorities in St. Petersburg were unable to accept the opening. It was some time (1831) before McLoughlin could be informed of this failure, and yet another year before he learned from Simpson that the Russian counter-proposals were 'preposterous', but in the meantime he had ordered that everything possible should be done to cultivate a friendly understanding and that any articles which could be spared without harm to the trade should be provided if the Russians requested them.

There was no possible doubt that the Company meant to move in

on the coastal trade. Whether this could be done in collaboration with the Russians was a minor problem of temporary expediency; the grand objective was clear. The commitment was explicit, and McLoughlin was given the necessary support when, in October 1829, Æmilius Simpson was made Superintendent of the Marine Department. This increased Simpson's stature. But McLoughlin's troubles in asserting his authority over ships' captains were taken into account when all ships, even under charter, were placed under his command from the day of their arrival in the Columbia until the day of their departure, whether they came from England or whether they were attached to the coast, and the stock-pile of a year's supplies in hand was accorded. The wreck of the *Isabella* in 1830 set back this vigorous approach and once more McLoughlin could not found the projected post at Nass. But he sent Æmilius Simpson north, in July 1830, this time with the *Vancouver* and the imposing *Eagle* in company, while Simpson was in the *Cadboro*, and with a full outfit of trade-goods.

It was 28th August before Simpson got to Nass, and by that time he had only the *Eagle* in company with the *Cadboro*, for he had despaired of getting the *Eagle* up to Fort Langley and back in time to visit Nass and so had detached the *Vancouver* for that service. Carefully sounding with the ship's boats, he took the *Cadboro* seven or eight miles up the river, to a point at which the channel became narrow and difficult, and there he chose a site for a post where the ship could lie within pistol shot of the shore. This seemed important, for several Indian villages lay near at hand, pine-trees for making pickets were not available (but could be rafted to the site) and defence was a serious consideration. It seemed likely that, with its favourable southern aspect, a post might grow good vegetables, but Simpson had to leave many things uncertain, for time was against him and he still had to trade with the Indians who had begun to assemble from up the river. Simpson offered prices which he considered liberal—one blanket for a large beaver—but he was forced to add a *douceur* of a cotton shirt and a little tobacco for every Indian who traded two skins. He was trading with Indians who were traders rather than hunters, getting their furs from tribes further up-river, and he could get little advantage over them, and little information of the river and the hinterland either. He did, however, find one Indian who, despite difficulties of language, made it clear that he understood how to catch beaver in an English-made trap, and Simpson thought it probable that Nass River was the Babine or the Simpson (as in fact it was) and that it brought down trade from the

northern parts of New Caledonia. Even so, it was unlikely to provide a route whereby ships or even canoes could get inland; trade must be done at the coast, in competition with Americans, and proportionately dear.

Æmilius Simpson had known that the American ships *Owhyhee* and *Convoy* were ahead of him in the early stages of his cruise, and after sailing from Nass he fell in with the *Louisa* of Boston, which had been on the coast for several months with the brig *Griffon* as consort. Faced with such competition, he had been forced to trade a good deal of spirits, otherwise he would have got no trade at all. Indeed, he thought (as Hudson's Bay officers for the most part thought) that it would prove to be necessary to trade spirits until the opposition had been driven from the coast; and he was not sanguine about this, for the Americans were better equipped for the coastal trade than he was, having more of the goods in demand and being able to trade arms and ammunition without limit, and spirits in great abundance.

Whatever Æmilius Simpson's reservations might be, John McLoughlin thought the skins he had traded very fine, and the quantity satisfactory for the short time he had been able to spend in trade. He would press on with the founding of a post at Nass, and if necessary he would put all his available shipping into the effort. This decision vindicated McLoughlin's control over the ships' captains on the coast, for the brig *Dryad*, Captain John Minors, would be the most imposing ship available in 1831, and would have to carry most of the trade-goods. The *Dryad* was a handsome vessel of about two hundred tons which the Company had bought in 1829 after using her as a chartered vessel. She had arrived in the Columbia in 1830 late, and with her cargo defective, and Captain Minors soon proved to be the sort of ship's officer whom McLoughlin (with reason) mistrusted and disliked—drunken, incompetent, and independent. He refused McLoughlin's order to transfer the command of his ship to Æmilius Simpson and the doctor, supported by James Birnie, formally went aboard the ship, read their engagements to the crew, and deprived the captain of his command. McLoughlin's account of the affair—the only account available—is measured, calm and almost legalistic. But it would be out of character if he had not lost his temper, and even in cold reasonableness the great gaunt doctor was a terrifying sight. The crew caved in, Captain Minors accepted the turn affairs had taken and asked for his passage to England. The control over shipping lay firmly in McLoughlin's hand, and in due course Simpson re-affirmed that the 'marine

Establishment' was entirely under his control. The *Eagle* had to sail for England with the furs, but with the three ships under his command, the *Dryad*, the *Vancouver* and the *Cadboro*, McLoughlin felt he could establish the post at Nass and 'manage the coasting trade'.

Such confidence came not only from his victory over Captain Minors but from the more important reason that the seasoned Captain Dominis had left the coast and had offered to sell out to McLoughlin, who had pursued the old North West technique of sending parties to 'accompany' the ship wherever possible, and to challenge the trade. The American's terms seemed quite unacceptable—four dollars a blanket, to be paid in beaver at the rate of four and a half dollars a large beaver, which meant that the American blankets would cost more than a beaver each when they would only fetch one beaver in trade. McLoughlin's counter-proposal, to pay at prime cost and to pay in boards, was equally unacceptable since the *Owhyhee* could not carry much timber and Dominis was in any case bound for Canton.

But McLoughlin knew, and Simpson lost no time in reminding him, that he had no authority to buy up an opposition, and that such a course would probably induce others to follow. His considered view was that two extra ships should be provided for the coasting trade, and that 'the sooner we oppose our Competitors strongly the Cheaper we will find it in the end'. But he was trying to develop a saw mill and a trade in deals as an offset to the high price of goods in the Columbia, and even Simpson, though adamant in his veto on purchases for payment in bills or in furs, was prepared to consider payment in boards. The Governor and Committee were prepared to adopt much the same view, and to set the heavy outlay of money to secure the coastal trade against the revenue from timber and salmon, so that the returns in furs from the Columbia defrayed the expenses charged against the fur trade. This was an item of purely internal accountancy, a paper transfer which did not in any way affect the over-all balances of the Company but which goes far to explain the way in which the Governor and Committee were prepared to venture capital in order to secure their frontier. By setting the costs of their frontier policy against newly developing trades they kept their main fur-trade accounts intact, and so gave themselves a confidence which they would not have felt if they had shown a deficit on this basic trade-account—a simple but important form of self-deception which they practised with their eyes wide open.

Captain Dominis may well have been in a mood to sell out in 1830, for he was aware that McLoughlin was determined to drive

him from the Columbia; but he had considerably reduced the terms upon which the Company's men were able to trade, and McLoughlin had as yet made but little progress. Yet something of the serenity which had always marked the Company's reaction to opposition was again evident in 1830. The Governor and Committee were prepared to accept the resignation of John McLoughlin and to continue with the policy for opposition in the Snake Country and on the coast as though the removal of that dominant character were a normal and acceptable incident.

Oppressed by the high prices dictated by opposition, by difficulties with his ships' captains, and by the intermittent fever which attacked Indians and Englishmen alike at Fort Vancouver, McLoughlin was proposing in 1830 to come east across the mountains. He had never taken very kindly to the country or to the climate of the coast, and had expected to move in 1826-7, in 1828, and again in 1829-30. But strongly as he felt, McLoughlin still postponed his withdrawal, even though Simpson and the Committee had gone so far as to appoint his successor, Chief Factor Duncan Finlayson, in 1830. Some of this by-play was without doubt due to McLoughlin's increasing irritability, for he differed violently from many of his colleagues in the trade and there is reason to think that he held a poor opinion of Finlayson and would not gladly have handed over to him. Whatever the reason, the result was the same, McLoughlin stayed on, and in 1831 was at last able to establish the post at Nass on which he had for years pinned his hopes.

To command the *Dryad* and the *Cadboro* went Æmilius Simpson, and to command the land party, and the post when it had been erected, went Peter Skene Ogden. The privations of the Snake expeditions had undermined even Ogden's robust constitution, and in March 1829, Simpson had told McLoughlin that Ogden should be succeeded by Work in command of the Snake expedition but that he was to be in charge of the party to establish Nass, and to oppose the Americans on the coast, in the spring of 1830. But Ogden did not get back to Fort Vancouver until July 1830; his last journey had taken him to Rio Colorado and almost to the Gulf of California, then north to the Bonaventura and so to Walla Walla. He had fallen in with American opposition, and his returns were the worst he had so far produced, for he had traversed a barren region, he had Americans with him and McLeod ahead of him, and in coming down the Dalles of the Columbia he had lost nine of his men and five hundred skins. This made a discouraging end to Ogden's work in the Snake Country, for although the Nass expedition had been postponed in

1830 it was firmly planned for 1831, and if Ogden was to go up the coast he could not go back again to the Snakes, even apart from the question of his health. He did, however, take the Snake expedition back as far as Walla Walla, where he handed over to John Work. On his return to Fort Vancouver he caught 'Intermittent Fever' (malaria), which had taken both whites and Indians in its grip to such an extent that the Committee even suggested that the post must be moved. McLoughlin postponed all attempts on Nass until the fever had died down, and sent the *Dryad* on a winter voyage to California and the *Vancouver* to Oahu. Ogden steadily recovered his health, and in April 1831 he was ready to sail with Æmilius Simpson, in command of the party which was to establish a post which was to be called Fort Simpson, on the site in Nass River which the Superintendent of the Marine Department had chosen in the previous year.

Æmilius Simpson was reminded of the agreement with Russia, and of the need to restrict sales of spirits, arms and ammunition. His first task was to assist Ogden and to remain at Nass River until the post was well enough established to dispense with the protection of the ships. Then he was to proceed on the coastal trade and to decide, in the fall, whether to winter on the coast or to call for the returns of Fort Langley and get back to Fort Vancouver. If possible, also, he was to examine the coast at Stikine and to ascertain whether, as reported, a large river fell into the ocean at that place. McLoughlin's general plan, once the post had been set up, was that if no opposition ships were in evidence then the two schooners, the *Vancouver* and the *Cadboro*, should work together to carry the trade into harbours where the Indians were threatening and the combined strength of the two small vessels would be needed. If there should be American opposition, then the two schooners could separate and shadow the Americans, able to go into shallow water and into the rivers and to make the trade 'a losing concern' to their rivals. The larger ship, the brig *Dryad*, was to be employed in transporting supplies to Fort Langley and to Fort Simpson and might with luck fit in a voyage with timber and salmon to California, Peru, Mexico or the Sandwich Islands, during the winter season.

As things turned out, responsibility for these plans devolved entirely on Ogden, for after two months on the coast Æmilius Simpson brought the *Dryad* back to Nass in September and there died of an inflammation of the liver. Thereby McLoughlin lost the only ship's officer for whom he had any serious respect; 'though his death at all times would be a loss Still in the present situation of our

affairs It is particularly so', he wrote. But much as he had respected Æmilius Simpson he had never welcomed the office of Superintendent of the Marine Department, and McLoughlin lost no time in putting the coasting trade under command of Ogden by attaching it to Fort Simpson, with Donald Manson to take command when Ogden should be absent on trading excursions.

This was looking ahead a little, but the important thing in the summer of 1831 was that Fort Simpson had been established and that the Nass River Indians, for all their troublesome reputation, had behaved well. The site, however, proved to have defects. There was no direct water communication with the interior, there was no ground for a garden, and very little provisions could be got from the Indians. Hopes centred round Æmilius Simpson's report that a large river (the Stikine) entered the ocean at Point Rothesay and led inland to an area where there was a Company's post—probably Fort Babine. McLoughlin told Ogden to choose a site for a post on Stikine River, or Port Essington. But Simpson had reported four American ships on the coast, and both he and Ogden bewailed the great quantities of spirits, arms and ammunition, which were traded. Yet by 1832 the observant Baron Wrangell, watching from the Russian post at New Archangel, noted that Ogden had considerably injured the Americans by following them on the coast with his schooner and outbidding them. The Americans, indeed, still got the lion's share of the trade because they offered arms and spirits; but Ogden also had used spirits in his trade, and when he had failed to reach an agreement with the Americans on the subject he openly resorted to this commerce and George Simpson told the Committee that unlimited use of arms and spirits would be necessary if the coastal trade were not to be completely abandoned. The line of argument was appreciated even by the Russians, and in 1832 Wrangell reported that Ogden was trading spirits 'not seeing any other means of crowding the Americans out of the straits'.

The deep-rooted objection to trading spirits was not only moral and social, for spirits were the easiest way for an irresponsible opposition to secure a trade. Whatever the reasons—and they were undoubtedly mixed—the policy was firm and was not merely a pretext for external show. McLoughlin had taken his ships' captains severely to task on the subject. 'It is unfortunate the Captain Sells liquor to the Indians—It spoils them—we Sell no liquor to them on any account, Selling liquor is prohibited by a positive order of the Committee.' Always he had enjoined his traders that 'If the Americans give no Liquor to Indians neither must we', and in his

suggestion that Captain Dominis might be bought he had expressed the hope that if opposition ended the Indians might be saved from evil habits. Prices, indeed, were under constant review, and though McLoughlin felt that he would never be able to improve on a price of one large beaver for a blanket in the coastal trade, yet inland (at Walla Walla for example) he kept the price to five skins for a blanket, and he raised the prices on Indians who came down to Fort Vancouver so as to get better terms. Prices were to remain at the maximum 'till there is an opposition at our door', and when opposition ceased the prices were hoisted back to the old standards of twenty skins to the gun or two skins to the blanket at Fort Langley, and Indian reluctance was beaten down. This was a straight commercial problem of securing a monopoly where privilege did not apply, and the subsequent exploitation of the monopoly so secured. No subtlety was involved, and the policy had been clearly outlined on many occasions, by the Governor and Committee, by Simpson, and by McLoughlin—nowhere more clearly or briefly than in his instructions to Æmilius Simpson that he was to keep Fort Vancouver prices where possible, but to lower his tariff to the 'state of the market'.

But problems of competition and monopoly could not be entirely divorced from the trade in spirits, and the same compromise-ethics were employed against the Russians as against the Americans. The solution did not differ radically from that evolved in earlier competition with the North West Company; if the Russians gave no rum to the Indians then Ogden also was to give none. There was in this the makings of a very reasonable agreement with the Russians for, as Simpson had early diagnosed, the two established concerns had much in common against the Americans, and Wrangell in fact proposed to Ogden, in 1832, that they should set up a joint outfit to oppose the Americans. The proposal was accompanied by an offer to buy wheat, all that was available from the Columbia Department, and to buy his supplies of manufactured goods also from the Company. But the Russian proposal was that the purchase should be made at prime cost only, in bills payable at St. Petersburg. Even allowing for the possibility that the Russians had not quite understood the phrases employed, McLoughlin thought they would soon prove to be as deeply opposed to the Company as the Americans. The Russians were referred to London, and Ogden was pressed to find a site for a post at Stikine or Port Essington from which the Company's trade could be extended to the north of New Caledonia.

Here McLoughlin was bringing into the calculation a personal feeling, that even for the coastal trade land establishments would

prove better than ships, and that the Company should only employ the minimum number of ships to supply the posts and to outface the Americans. Once the Americans had been forced to retire, shipping should be cut, for apart from expense 'the Company is never in want of a Gentleman to take charge of a Land Establishment, but it is extremely difficult to find Naval Officers to manage the coasting Trade'. It was almost impossible, too, to make sailors conform to the only pattern of behaviour which could prove effective with coastal Indians, to treat them with apparent candour but never to relax from anxious precaution; sooner or later, unless ships' crews and Indians could be kept apart, blood would be shed.

Ogden had been told, when he went to found Fort Simpson in 1831, that his post and the two schooners should be adequate to drive the Americans out, and in 1832 McLoughlin was able to quote a cutting from the *New York Gazette* in which the disappointed Captain Dominis had said that the Company was too well established for Americans to expect to make anything in the fur trade. Even so, McLoughlin needed the necessary minimum of ships, and in the summer of 1832 the *Vancouver* ran into trouble; she got carried out to sea in a gale and was almost wrecked, and when she was hauled up for repairs it was found that though her main timbers were sound, where sap wood had been used on her it was all rotten. The *Vancouver* needed a long refit, and the coastal trade, even by McLoughlin's standards, needed another ship. At this juncture the perverse sanity of McLoughlin comes into the picture. Demurely as he had accepted the veto on buying out an opposition which had been provoked by Dominis and the *Owhyhee*, he was not entirely convinced, and in 1832 he played the Governor and Committee's emphasis on shipping (in which he did not believe) so as to buy out opposition (which he had been forbidden to do).

In July 1832 Captain William Henry McNeill brought the brig *Lama* of Boston to Fort Vancouver. He had spent the winter on the coast and had collected a fair cargo, including four thousand beaver (though beaver could only be hunted on the coast during summer, owing to the heavy rains). McNeill's object, said McLoughlin, was to sell his brig, and though McLoughlin did not make a bid for the ship he bought a couple of puncheons of rum from the American. Then, as the damage to the *Vancouver* was appreciated, he sent Duncan Finlayson to Oahu to buy a replacement and later wrote emphasising the merits of the *Lama* and of McNeill and his officers. So McLoughlin was delighted to learn that Finlayson had not only bought the *Lama* but had engaged her captain and her two mates in

the Company's service as well. This looked like buying out an opposition with a vengeance! The *Lama* at £1,250, of which £750 was paid in timber and salmon, was undoubtedly a bargain, for she was a well-found brig of 145 tons, and Finlayson could have made a profit of £500 by selling her again. But Finlayson and McLoughlin expected trouble from the Council of the Northern Department and from Simpson, though they hoped that the Governor and Committee might be more reasonable. The fact that McNeill had behind him fifteen years of experience on the coast seemed a strong argument, and they emphasised that in recruiting him and his ship they were strengthening themselves to continue the struggle rather than paying for peace; 'it will readily be seen that our only plan is to oppose them by a steady, well regulated opposition'. In fact the Governor and Committee, having just bought the strong teak-built *Nereide* of 240 tons for £3,650 for the coastal trade, thoroughly disapproved of the purchase of the *Lama* and also of the engagement of her American officers. But McLoughlin took his stand upon McNeill's character, experience and ability, Simpson surprisingly supported the move, and in 1834 the Governor and Committee handsomely withdrew their opinion that it had been an unnecessary and injudicious measure.

McLoughlin had in the meantime kept McNeill and his ship on the coast, and with no Americans to oppose him in 1833 Ogden had made a good trade, and hoped to do better in 1834. Prospects were so bright that McLoughlin hoped to reduce the naval establishment to two ships, and such a reduction was habitually associated in his mind with an expansion of the land posts, to carry on the trade. Ogden was much aboard ship, leaving the trade at Fort Simpson to Donald Manson, and in 1833 he explored forty or fifty miles up Stikine River without finding a satisfactory channel and then came on down to Fort Vancouver in October, accompanying his furs. His purpose was in part to continue discussions of the Stikine project, for Duncan Finlayson had been sent up the coast in 1833 and had put in a report on the coastal trade in which an establishment at Stikine was thought unnecessary. It was generally agreed that Fort Simpson might be moved, for its defects were serious; but McLoughlin wanted Stikine opened up, and hoped to find his route to the interior there. In this Ogden agreed with McLoughlin; but he agreed with George Simpson when in 1832 Simpson suggested a steamship for coastal work.

The age of steamship predominance lay at least a generation ahead, and it required imagination to make such a suggestion for

the Pacific Coast in 1832. But the advantages of steamers were thought to lie chiefly in the navigation of coastal waters, inland waterways, and short ferry-boat trips. On such lines the Pacific Coast certainly seemed a proper ground for a steamer, but the difficulties of getting such a ship out from England might be considerable. Yet McLoughlin had himself made such a proposal to Simpson as early as 1826. So it is not surprising that Simpson should have put forward the idea in 1832, nor that McLoughlin, facing his own urgent problems, should have protested against the probable cost, especially in view of his determination to cut his shipping to the minimum. That Ogden should have made the same suggestion on his visit to Fort Vancouver in 1833 may seem a little out of character, though his personal knowledge of the difficulties of coastal navigation could easily have led to such a proposal.

McLoughlin, though prepared to admit that a steamship might prove the most convenient for coastal navigation, nevertheless insisted that he supported neither this request nor any proposal for a new Superintendent of the Naval Department, and he was able to take up a completely self-righteous position when he explained to Ogden that the Governor and Committee had sent out the *Nereide* instead of a steamer, to explain to the Governor and Committee that he was not implicated in the demand for a steamer, and to protest when an order for a steamer was placed in 1834. As the time approached when, in 1836, the famous paddle-steamer the *Beaver* might be expected on the coast, McLoughlin missed no opportunity of explaining his disapproval, and even of asking how he should dispose of the steamer if and when she had proved a failure. Further, when the *Nereide* arrived in the Columbia in April 1834, McLoughlin maintained that she was not needed on the coast and must trade timber and salmon to the south, while he told Captain Langtry, R.N. (whom the Governor and Committee had recruited to succeed Æmilius Simpson as Superintendent of the Naval Establishment) that the *Nereide* would probably be sent home and Langtry must be prepared to transfer to one of the smaller ships. This Langtry, though on the whole prepared to be co-operative, thought his articles from the Admiralty precluded him from doing, so McLoughlin did not give him command of the Company's naval department, and later in 1834 he sent the *Nereide* home again, and Captain Langtry with her.

This was a clear flouting of the wishes of the Governor and Committee, and they countered by sending the *Nereide* out again, as well as both the steamer *Beaver* and the barque *Columbia*. McLoughlin's

course of conduct might have been more acceptable if he had in the meantime managed to give his coastal establishments more stability. But though he had told Ogden in 1834 that his main task must be to set up a post on the Stikine, at least thirty miles from the ocean, nothing had been achieved except that a major crisis had been provoked.

Ogden's 'Report of Transactions at Stikine, 1834', was eventually trimmed down and forwarded to Lord Palmerston who, as Foreign Secretary, took the matter up with the Russian government. The report as submitted by Ogden made it clear that lack of a common language might easily create difficulties with the Russians. He had sailed up to within about fifteen miles of the Russian post at Point Highfield and had there been presented with a proclamation by Baron Wrangell, and warned (as far as he could gather) by a series of non-English-speaking Russian officers that they would, if necessary, use force to prevent him from anchoring in Stikine River. Eventually the point was driven home by means of a Spanish linguist whom Dr. Tolmie could understand. Ogden nevertheless refused to move and maintained that he had the right to trade under the Treaty of 1825; and he sent Dr. Tolmie and Captain Duncan to visit the Russian post. There, with an armed brig to enforce his words (some accounts said she carried fourteen guns, some eighteen) the commander Captain Sarembo refused the right of sailing up the river; they might set up a post in the interior on English territory but they could not navigate within the river until he should get direct orders from Wrangell at Sitka. To Sitka, accordingly, a boat was sent, and Ogden also wrote to Wrangell to remonstrate.

As Ogden awaited the reply from Sitka, Captain Sarembo's purpose was emphasised by two chiefs of the Stikine tribe who, as Ogden wrote, 'assumed a tone I was not in the habit of hearing' and told him he might set up a post in the Sound but that they would prevent him from going up the river since that would injure their trade with the Indians of the interior. So Ogden, while convinced that by treaty he had the right to navigate within the straits, found that his men were alarmed at the combined opposition of the Russians and the Indians, and decided that he would not insist on his rights until the answer came from Sitka. If, as he hoped, the Russians withdrew their opposition, he thought he might deal with the Indians 'by conciliatory measures and presents'; but to proceed in the face of joint opposition might only result in a loss of prestige which he could not afford. So he got his ships safe inside Point Highfield, and in further discussions with the Indians he revealed that

their willingness to trade at the coast was due to their desire to get arms and ammunition, which the Russians quite properly refused to trade. Ogden found this rather a delicate situation, in which he decided to adhere to the convention and to refuse arms and ammunition. But he was convinced that the Russians, despite their denials, traded or gave spirits, and was at a loss how to act until the boat returned from Sitka. Wrangell was absent, and Sarembo was ordered not to allow passage to the English; so with the Indian chiefs re-asserting their opposition, Ogden had no alternative but to abandon Stikine and the project of building there, and to set out on a frustrating coastal voyage at the end of June.

In handing on Ogden's report to Palmerston the Company deleted the portions which described the Indians' opposition. This in a way was proper, for government support was only being sought against the Russians; but in that so selective an account gave the impression that the Russians alone were responsible for Ogden's failure the 'editing' was questionable. McLoughlin, characteristically, placed the whole blame firmly on the Russians' shoulders and formulated accounts of the failure from which expenses in England and losses in prestige were alike excluded, but which held the Russians answerable for £22,150 10s. 11d. expended on the expedition. What rankled most with McLoughlin, and gave an edge to his report on the whole affair, was his conviction that the furs which would be traded at the coast, or which would be intercepted before the coastal Indians brought them down, if Ogden built up the river, were the produce of the Company's own territories in the interior.

The failure at Stikine cut deep. But Ogden's summer had not been entirely wasted, and in its way McLoughlin's policy for coastal trade by land establishments was vindicated. Fort McLoughlin had been set up, on Dowager Island in the entrance to Milbanke Sound, by Duncan Finlayson in 1833, to bring habits of peaceful trade to the Indians of the mainland and of Queen Charlotte Islands, who came there to trade. Early incidents resulted in a direct attack on the fort, but Chief Trader Donald Manson conducted a successful defence, a *modus vivendi* was agreed on, and the continuous existence of the post and its small garrison produced an effect which irregular visits from a ship would not have done; and through 1834 Fort McLoughlin traded quietly and peacefully. So firmly was it established that Ogden was ordered to reduce it to sixteen men so as to get the necessary strength for his venture to Stikine.

The ease with which the Indians could be brought into dependence, and reduced to orderly conduct by a land establishment, was

further demonstrated when in 1834, at the end of his coastal voyage, Ogden had called at Nass to transfer Fort Simpson to a new site south of the outer mouth of the Portland Canal (its present position). The defects of the first post at Nass were sufficiently known, and there was hope that the new post, with Nass River at its back, would command the furs coming down from inland. But the new site, if defensible, was if anything more barren than the old, and the Indians, who had quickly got into habits based upon the old fort, did not welcome the move. When the *Dryad* called to carry away the fixtures to the new post, in September 1834, Indian opposition therefore provoked ugly scenes. Fortunately no lives were lost and the incident ended amicably enough, but it had revealed that Indian dependence on trade had swiftly passed from the stage at which plunder for immediate satisfaction predominated, and had reached a stage at which restraint was accepted because constant access to European goods was a necessity.

This was a long-term and subtle argument for the coastal trade. Equally important was the short-term argument that posts kept the American ships at a permanent disadvantage since they gave the Indians constant opportunities to trade, so that when the Americans arrived they no longer found accumulations of peltry which the Indians had stored up in readiness for them, but only the haphazard collections which chanced to be on hand at the time of their call. But the Americans in 1834 were by no means driven from the coast. John Work was ordered on a coastal expedition in the *Lama* in December of that year, but he was held up by the difficulty of getting out from the Columbia, by news of Ogden's failure at Stikine, and by the need to revise plans because the *Vancouver* had been completely wrecked and all her cargo lost. Trade on the coast was normally finished by the end of September, and Work's chief task on the *Lama* was to supply the posts, but his delays turned the expedition into a trading voyage and he found himself working in close opposition to two American ships, the *Europa* and the *Bolivar*, with the Indians playing one ship off against the others to such an extent that in some harbours the three captains even formed a ring and agreed on a standard of trade against the Indians. Between the shore establishments and the ship, the Hudson's Bay Company certainly got the lion's share, more than twice the joint trade of the two Americans; but the trade was still obviously based upon competition. So while Simpson had no fears of the Americans, who admitted 'that we are masters of the trade', McLoughlin could get but little comfort from accounts of the coastal trade.

True to his theories, McLoughlin alleged that the small profits from the Columbia Department were due to excessive costs of the many ships, and that land establishments would prove cheaper and more profitable. But the figures of Fort Colville, for example, in 1831 shewed a profit of £3,935 on returns valued at £4,786; but in 1833 the profit stood at only £3,908 on returns which had increased in value to £5,731. To a large extent these figures were the result of internal 'paper accountancy' in which the costs were reckoned by advances on prime costs and the furs were reckoned at list prices. The real figures for costs of posts, transport, goods and overheads, were not yet available, nor were the prices fetched at sale by the furs. It took three years for the Company to work out the profit on an outfit and to make a final distribution under the Deed Poll. But McLoughlin's figures were good enough to measure whether his trade was improving or declining, and he treated them as a guide to general policy, not as an accurate analysis of dealings. So in 1833 he told his traders that the loss on the year's coastal trade, exclusive of depreciation on ships, was over £4,000 and that they must make the captains trade harder; and in 1834 he wrote that 'In 1833 we traded furs on the coast to the amount of £13,000 and had no opposition to compete with us—yet we lost £2,800'.

In effect the Americans were almost ready to sell out, but the Company also still had to adopt a low tariff. Wrangell, however, could clearly see that although the Americans were the ostensible object of the Company's rivalry, and that he might well side with the English at this stage, the Company's opposition must eventually turn against the Russians. It was for this reason that he had built the small Russian post at the mouth of the Stikine and had stationed his armed brig there to forestall Ogden, and Simpson at least acknowledged, as did McLoughlin, that the ultimate purpose was to cut off the Russians from the trade which they got from the British interior. He was 'striking at the very root of their trade', and Wrangell took this Stikine affair simply as a further example of the Company's policy, to be taken in context with the methods used in the Snake Country. This encroachment seemed really unfair to Wrangell, for he thought the Company had adequate territories to the south. But although he was uncompromising to Ogden, Wrangell was still aware that the Russians and the Company might well prove to be complementary to each other.

The Governor and Committee were equally aware of the need to keep friendly relations going. So while they forwarded their complaints to Palmerston (and so to Lord Durham as ambassador at St.

Petersburg who forecast that 'should the representations of the Hudson's Bay Company prove uncontradicted, the acts of the Russian Authorities in North America will not only be disavowed but censured'), they counselled moderation to McLoughlin, who was ordered to take no further steps towards the establishment of the post at Stikine. They hoped to secure 'the undisturbed command of the trade to ourselves and the Russians respectively who alone have any good claim to it'. But this was far different from yielding to the Russians, and should a compromise not prove possible then Simpson's advice was to call home McLoughlin and his accountant, to substantiate the Stikine claim in detail, while the Council of the Northern Department resolved in 1836 that a post should be set up on Stikine River by a party moving downstream from Dease Lake, to intercept the trade which found its way thence to the coast.

Ogden was himself transferred from the coastal trade in 1835, to take command of this attack on the rear of the Russian position as Chief Factor in command of New Caledonia, but the voyage by Tolmie was followed up by Duncan Finlayson. By 1836 McLoughlin knew that the Russian government had denied the construction which Baron Wrangell had put upon the 1825 Treaty, and could tell his men to take a strong but conciliatory tone. At the same time he had received from England the barque *Columbia* and the steamer *Beaver*, with a strong reproof for his persistence in advocating land establishments rather than shipping as the dominant factor in the coastal trade. McLoughlin tried to shrug off the difference between the Committee and himself as due to opinions on the merits of a steamer, but it was clear that the bases of the whole system, and the relative costs of ships and posts, were in dispute. The Committee, in any case, were themselves quite open-minded about the value of a steamer—'we still have our doubts, whether the scheme will succeed, as much will depend on those who have the conducting the experiment, but we have done all in our power to give effect to the measure'. McLoughlin too, protesting valiantly against the excessive number of ships, kept the *Nereide* (which arrived late from England) for coastal work for which he thought her unsuitable, and sent the steamer north with Duncan Finlayson, to call on the Russians at Sitka if possible.

Finlayson, a competent and meticulous reporter, sent in a valuable account of his summer journey. The removal of Fort Simpson from Nass had brought great advantages and the Indians were becoming attached to the place, even some who inhabited Russian territory bringing in their furs, so that the returns had almost

doubled within a year despite American opposition and Russian efforts to keep Indians within their frontier. Fort McLoughlin had also improved its trade, but not in so spectacular a proportion. Both posts, however, needed sufficient men for defence as well as for trade, and both would require regular shipments of provisions although potatoes seemed likely to thrive, given sufficient care. Finlayson suggested that provisions might be shipped up from Fort Langley or from the new post at Nisqually rather than add the burden to Fort Vancouver.

The steamer herself seemed to Finlayson 'not discouraging'. But she had started late in the season and had taken time to explore, and so her returns had suffered. Concluding that 'on the whole she will give the most effective blow to the opposition which they have ever met with on the coast, and will also lessen in a great measure the traffic carried on amongst the natives themselves', Finlayson nevertheless emphasised the difficulties in operating the *Beaver*. As a supply-ship she needed to be so deeply laden that she could not face a heavy sea without completely immersing her paddles, and, unless she called at the posts where wood had been stored up in readiness for her, she had to stop two days out of three since it took six axemen two days to cut enough fuel to last her for a day's steaming. She could in any case not navigate in the canals and inlets by night since they were so cumbered with driftwood that she could easily break her paddles. But she could be counted on for a steady average of thirty miles a day, and she could work the coast regardless of wind. The impression which she made on the Indians was another great asset, and an occasional visit by the steamer was to be reckoned as affording considerable protection to the posts. The *Beaver* seemed to have played her part in securing the increase in the coastal trade of 1836.

Finlayson, however, had not spent his whole time on the coast in 1836 in the steamer. He had, from the outset, met 'hot opposition' from the American ships *Lagrange*, Captain Snow, and the *Peabody*, Captain Moore, and to this Finlayson attributed the costs and difficulties of the trade. They had provided a 'vexatious opposition' at Fort Simpson, and had also visited Fort McLoughlin; but their chief offence was that they had opposed Captain McNeill on the *Lama* and had made him trade dear. McNeill knew the coast, and justified McLoughlin and Finlayson in getting him and his ship into the Company's service, for he often got ahead of the Americans and secured all the skins, and he generally got 'the best share of what ever was to be gleaned'.

Finlayson visited the Russian post at Tongass in the steamer and there encountered the Russian ship *Tallyho*, of twelve guns. Here Captain Sarembo was understood to say that his Governor would not be at Sitka till the end of August, that the convention with Russia had been ended (as indeed it had, having run its appointed ten years), and that Finlayson was forbidden to sail to Sitka by way of the interior canals. Finlayson denied the Russian contentions but said that since the Governor would be absent he proposed to return to Fort Simpson and then to go to Sitka at the end of August. Next day Sarembo said he would secure permission for Finlayson to go to Sitka at the end of August by the inland waterways, and Finlayson replied that he intended to do so whether permission was forthcoming or not. It is not surprising that as he weighed anchor a Russian boat came alongside 'with the very polite message of "My Captain speak you go away"', for both sides were forced to preserve their status by a show of strength.

But although the Russians had two armed ships on the coast they could accomplish little. The Americans paid no attention to threats of armed intervention and only pretended obedience out of fear that the bills on St. Petersburg which they held would not be met. They sold considerable quantities of goods and provisions to the Russians, who were quite dependent on them, and it was this trade which covered the Americans' overheads and enabled them to offer such high prices for furs on the coast. So Finlayson analysed the situation, adding that the Americans were also prepared to dispose of the remainders of their cargoes at bargain prices before they left the coast for China. The essential thing, therefore, if the Americans were to be driven from the coast, was to supplant them in their supply-trade with the Russians, and this Finlayson attempted by renewing the discussions which Ogden had begun with Wrangell in 1833. When he came off the port of Sitka early in September he was ceremonially taken ashore and politely received by the Governor and his officers. Wrangell had retired to Europe, where his knowledge gave him great weight, and had been replaced by Ivan Kupreanoff, who showed Finlayson round the buildings. Finlayson reckoned that Sitka was well placed and could be a place of great strength, but that the buildings were neither well constructed nor well manned. He lost no time in getting to the object of his visit and explaining that although the Hudson's Bay Company had no wish to encroach on Russian territory or trade they expected, under the Treaty of 1825, to have free access to their own territories and to navigate the canals and streams for that purpose. He further argued that neither

the Russians nor the English could hope to reduce the extravagant prices which they had to pay for furs as long as the Russians bought provisions from the Americans and so brought them to the coast in a peculiarly advantageous position.

The Russian Company appears to have lived in a state of dependence upon the Indians combined with suspicion and hostility—so much so that a later report alleged that 'The Kolosh (Tlinkets) cannot in any respect be regarded as dependent on the Company, rather it may be said that, in turn, the Company's colonies on the American coast depend on them; for the Kolosh have only, so to speak, to begin to make a little noise to deprive the port of Archangel and its entire population of all fresh food and even the opportunity to show their faces a few yards outside the fortifications'. From its first appearance on the American coast the Russian Company had met hostility from the Tlinkets. Its governors had done their best to win the support of the chiefs from time to time, by gifts and acknowledgments and the presentation of brocaded caftan, sash and cap, which corresponded closely to the Hudson's Bay Company's bestowal of a Captain's outfit upon friendly chiefs. But they were dependent for provisions, the Tlinkets had arms from the American ships, and the Russians simply could not buy all the skins which the Tlinkets produced—certainly not at the prices which the Americans had taught them to expect. It was therefore almost imperative for Wrangell to arrange some source of trade-goods which would enable him to satisfy the Tlinkets, and it was equally important that he should undermine the American position so that the supply of arms would cease and extravagant prices would drop.

Finlayson played on these factors astutely, emphasising the need for agreement so as to reduce the extravagant prices, remove rum and ammunition from the coastal trade, and prevent the Americans from selling goods under prime cost in the knowledge that they would cover themselves handsomely from the sales which they would make at Sitka itself. It was fairly easy to agree that the two companies had much in common against the Americans. But although when Kupreanoff came aboard the *Lama* he was impressed by the quality and price of the Company's goods, he maintained that he could not think of closing Sitka to the Americans unless he had a guarantee that the alternate source of supply would always be open to him. This involved a long-term commitment which would have to be arranged between London and St. Petersburg. For the moment nothing was needed. The Russians had in hand a two years' supply of everything except leaf tobacco. But the Governor asked

for samples and prices, and promised to send a proposal to his own directors so that they could then attempt an arrangement with the Governor and Committee in London. But though the Governor emphasised his need for a secure supply-line he admitted that he was forced to supplement the shipment of wheat, which came every other year from Kronstadt, by purchases in California, an unreliable arrangement which he would like to replace by supplies from the Columbia. He needed about 8,000 bushels of wheat a year, and Finlayson saw great advantages in the Company's ability to supply the Russians with country produce.

For the rest, the Russians needed about 30,000 dollars worth of goods a year, including the wheat. They wanted no ships (and in truth the Company's attempts to build ships on the Pacific coast were not as yet very successful) and they expected a steamer of their own, brought from the United States. When Finlayson got to Sitka he had found three American ships in port, and a fourth came in from China while he was there. This might have seemed ominous, but Finlayson noted that the only American who got any trade from the Russians was one who had a three-years' contract already signed, and he hopefully thought that his presence with the steamer would notify the Americans that the Company had entered the Sitka market, and discourage them. If the Governor and Committee would only agree to supply goods on a moderate percentage he had no doubt that the whole trade would fall into the Company's hands; and this he estimated at between £75,000 and £83,750 sterling a year since the Russians collected annually about 15,000 beaver and land-otter, 700-800 sea-otters and 30,000 fur-seal skins.

Kupreanoff apologised for the treatment which Finlayson had met at Tongass and agreed that in future the Company's ships might visit Sitka as best suited their convenience, by steam or otherwise. Moreover the one American who had done any worth-while trade at Sitka, Mr. French of the *Europa*, sought the chance to buy lumber, flour, salmon and butter from the Company, and the advantages of the steamer seemed vastly enhanced by the *Beaver's* investigation of a promising seam, 'a mountain of pure coal' according to Indian report, on the north-east end of Vancouver Island. McLoughlin, who had hoped that a man-of-war might be sent out to support the Company in a further attempt to build at Stikine, was sufficiently impressed by the Committee's veto and by Finlayson's report to order his officers not to go to any place in the Russian territory on any account unless driven by stress of weather 'as we must not Violate their Rights'. At the same time he thought that a second

attempt at a Stikine post would be successful (and very valuable) especially with the steamer in support. In the meantime, whilst he asked permission from London to renew the Stikine venture, McLoughlin favoured the negotiations which Finlayson had begun, though he saw no reason why the Russians should be supplied except on remunerative terms. He thought that the Americans must in any case give up the coastal trade and so was averse from making any sacrifice on that account.

The Governor and Committee, this time, did not allow the opportunity to pass. The heavy claim for interruption of Ogden's efforts was still in dispute and Nesselrode, as Russian Foreign Minister, although he had admitted the British right of navigation, was trying to make it appear that Ogden had faltered 'by an excess of caution' rather than because Saremba had offered 'any insurmountable obstacle or any actual danger'. This was exasperating, but since the ten years' period for the Treaty of 1825, with its right of navigation, made renewal imperative, the Company was not in too strong a position and negotiations were not actually broken off by the time Finlayson's report gave the Governor and Committee a further chance to propose a compromise.

McLoughlin had been called to England in 1837, and he was on hand in London to give his views as the Russian negotiations proceeded. He had not come home by way of Cape Horn, nor immediately on receiving the summons. He knew well that he was under criticism, for differences on the steamer and coastal policy were tied in with even more fundamental differences on the buying out of American opposition. Indeed, thinking that McLoughlin had departed when bidden, the Governor and Committee had written that the conduct of business in the Columbia Department seemed lacking in system and regularity, and that plans must be laid well in advance and submitted both to the Council of the Northern Department and to the Governor and Committee in London. This had been written to James Douglas, for Finlayson, who had been designated to replace McLoughlin, had fallen ill and McLoughlin's duties were split into three; Samuel Black was at last promoted to Chief Factor and given command of the inland posts of the Columbia, Ogden remained in command of New Caledonia, and James Douglas took the Lower Columbia, the coasting trade and Fort Vancouver itself. The arrangements were made on the assumption that McLoughlin would sail on the *Sumatra* in 1837, but he delayed his departure on the grounds of ill-health and then crossed the mountains and came to England by way of Red River in 1838. He left Fort Vancouver on 22nd March,

and the letter which so strongly criticised his management did not arrive there till 29th May, so he cannot have read the actual phrases. But McLoughlin well knew that some of his actions and much of his policy were not acceptable. In 1836 he had been granted the considerable bonus of £1,100 which the Northern Council had proposed as a recognition of his services, and in acknowledging the grant he had emphasised that he considered it primarily as a mark of approbation for the unorthodox courses which he had pursued 'when in novel circumstances of urgent difficulty which compelled me to step boldly out of the beaten path of routine'.

McLoughlin seems to have gathered heart as he approached London, and he arrived at a stage when constructive advice was more important than recriminations over the exact sum to be demanded in recompense for the Stikine incident. The Governor and Committee hoped that they could supply the Russians with goods and with wheat at so low a price that the Americans could not compete without loss, and Douglas (to whom this news was sent) agreed with McLoughlin that the negotiation need not be pushed beyond the point at which the Company could make a reasonable profit by supplying the Russians. Affairs on the coast had developed considerably in favour of the Company since Finlayson's journey to Sitka, although the returns of the *Beaver* had suffered a decline of ten per cent., since she had been laid up at Fort Simpson during the winter months and had then suffered a mutiny. The Russian officials had relaxed none of their pretensions, and the Treaty of 1825 had run its full ten years; but inadvertently they had helped the British. They had given a contract for their supplies to a single Boston firm which, so far, had shown no inclination to engage in the fur trade, and thereby had made it less profitable for other Americans to come to the coast; and they had put a far more effective blockade upon their coast, which drove off the Americans without seriously interrupting the trade between Fort Simpson and the Russian Indians.

The result was that the coast was free from American opposition at the end of 1837, and though tribal wars and an outbreak of small-pox cut the trade, the returns were swelled by furs brought by Russian Indians and by those which had been hoarded in hope of an opposition and better prices, and the final accounts were much more favourable than had seemed probable. Douglas, however, was a seasoned trader, and he knew better than to take advantage of his position to achieve a heavy reduction in prices which would cause animosity, even though the high prices paid on the coast were all that allowed the trading Indians (especially the Bella Coola tribe of

Bentinck Arms) to buy skins from the Indians of New Caledonia and bring them to the coast to trade at a profit. A drop in the prices obtainable on the coast would therefore make this trade unprofitable and so would release many more skins to be traded inland in New Caledonia; but Douglas dared not attempt it.

The Russian affair nevertheless appeared most promising to Douglas, and he was further encouraged by a report from Chief Trader John McLeod, whom he had sent south in 1838 to meet and re-equip a 'Southern Trapping Party'. The trappers were to work down Feather River to the Northern Bonaventura and so to the coast near the Bay of Trinidad, where the ship would meet them and send them off again with fresh goods and traps. The *Cadboro* failed to make contact with the trappers as she ran south, so McLeod made for the Russian post at Fort Ross. Here he was received with the greatest kindness, and the *Cadboro* was piloted into Bodega, where lay a Russian frigate with Captain Kupreanoff, Governor of the Russian American colonies, aboard. Horses were got from California and the trapping party was located and re-equipped, and its furs got aboard while the *Cadboro* lay at the Russian port. More important was the news, delivered by the Russian Governor, that he had received orders from his government to open the navigation of the Stikine to British vessels and that the Company might therefore develop its plans for a post in that river.

The amity was slightly chilled by the Russians' ill-disguised displeasure at news of British successes in Arctic exploration, for they thought that the Company, in outfitting an expedition under Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson, was robbing them of their 'anticipated triumph over British enterprise'. In this the Company was staking a claim for support from the British government and was playing upon the nationalist feeling which could be discovered even among those who were most unlikely to have supported more mercenary nationalism in overseas enterprises. In 1836 the Committee had told Lord Glenelg, then Colonial Secretary, that they were constantly interested in exploration and were planning an expedition to complete the work of Franklin, of Beechey and of Back. The Northern Council took up the notion and planned a party to be led by Chief Factors Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson. Dease, the most active and effective of four brothers in the Company's service (all of whom had served in the North West Company) had been with Franklin in 1824 and had later served in Mackenzie River and in New Caledonia. He had great knowledge and experience, and notable 'suavity of manners' (the phrase is

George Simpson's) which admirably fitted him for a land voyage. Thomas Simpson was to show an equally marked lack of suavity. He was unable to get on with half-breeds, but for the rest his relative the Governor accepted him as 'one of the most complete men of business in the country'. He was half-brother to Æmilius Simpson, a son of the aunt Mary who had taken such good care of George in his youth, and the protégé of the Governor. He had graduated from King's College, Aberdeen, in 1828 and had then joined the Company as an apprentice clerk. He accompanied the Governor on his tour of the Southern Department in 1829, and after a season at York Fort Thomas Simpson returned to Red River, where he saw much of his elderly relative, and developed a caustic criticism of the Governor and of the Company. He was vigorous, tired of desk-work and dancing attendance at Red River, and admirably equipped for the scientific side of the expedition.

Dease had spent the winter 1836-7 at Fort Chipewyan preparing for the expedition. Thomas Simpson left Red River in December 1836 on foot and got to Fort Chipewyan by 1st February—a journey of 1,377 miles in sixty-two days! Setting out northwards in June 1837 with two boats and a canoe, they followed the Mackenzie to the sea, followed the coast westwards to Return Reef, the furthest point reached by Franklin in 1826, and then continued westwards until they had reached Point Barrow. Thereby they linked up the work done by Captain Beechey, sailing east through Bering Strait, with the westernmost point of Franklin's work. They had completed the first survey of the coast westwards from Franklin's Point Turnagain before going into winter quarters at Fort Confidence, the post which they had prepared for this purpose on Great Bear Lake, and this was the state of their discovery which would have been known (if so much could have been known) to the Russians in the summer of 1838.

The project was not yet complete, for in 1838 the expedition was to cross from Great Bear Lake to the Coppermine and work eastwards along the coast from the mouth of that river past Franklin's Point Turnagain as far as Cape Beaufort on $106^{\circ} 3'$ West. After a second winter at Fort Confidence they took the Coppermine route to the coast once more, and this time they got even further east and connected up with Back's discoveries at the mouth of Back's (Great Fish) River. So Back's discoveries were linked with Franklin's, and Franklin's with Beechey's; Dease Strait was opened up and Victoria Land made known, as were Simpson Strait and King William Land. The whole coast from King William Land westwards had been

covered by the end of 1839, and the Colonial Office was informed as reports came in. The Company had shown the liveliest interest throughout, they had voted supplies, and rewards to the tune of £1,000, they proclaimed that their interest was purely scientific, and only when the westward portion of the task was complete did they begin to hope that the discoveries might bring in increases of furs or speed up the trade of Mackenzie River.

The Company might justly be proud. It was the Company, as James Douglas noted, which had upheld British prestige and had robbed the Russians of their triumph; and the Company had shown abilities, of which its officers and servants alone were masters, in so doing. Ability to live off the country, depending upon a gun, a trap and a fishing net, allowed the Hudson's Bay men to preserve their pemmican for emergencies, to lighten their loads and to travel without the cumbrous equipment which other expeditions required. As early as his first winter in Athabaska George Simpson (undeniably prejudiced since Franklin seemed too friendly with the North West Company) had noted that the first Franklin expedition, under Admiralty sponsorship, was ill-planned and ill-prepared and that its commander needed his three meals a day, found tea an indispensable necessity, and could not walk more than eight miles a day. Allowing for Simpson's bias, the contrast was clear; and remained so.

The techniques and the hardihood of the traders-turned-explorers were exemplified in the voyages of John Rae, but Dease and Simpson had already set the pattern—a pattern derived from Kelsey, Henday, Hearne and Turnor, David Thompson, Alexander Mackenzie, Fraser, Peter Pond, and George Simpson himself; derived, indeed, from the habits and traditions of the fur trade. Rae was described by R. M. Ballantyne as 'one of the best snow-shoe walkers in the service, was also an excellent rifle-shot, and could stand an immense amount of fatigue'. Twice during his career Rae walked over a thousand miles in the course of a couple of months, and he had the reputation of being able to walk a hundred miles in two days. His explorations and successful search for the remains of Franklin's expedition brought the greatest credit to himself and his Company. Dease and Simpson were in the same tradition, and Thomas Simpson's capacity to cover a steady twenty miles a day on foot along the arctic shores greatly enlarged the range of the expedition. In 1839 their achievements brought the two explorers a Civil List pension of £100 a year each while the government was so far cognisant of the contribution which the Company had made to arctic

discovery that the Governor, John Henry Pelly, was created a baronet and George Simpson was created a Knight, both for this express reason.

Pensions, Knighthoods and Baronetcies, were signs that the Colonial Office looked with favour on the Company, and this was important as the renewal of the licence of exclusive trade, granted for twenty-one years in 1821, became a subject of discussion and as the Russian dispute revealed the close support of the Russian American Company by its government. In the event the Company convinced Glenelg that its exclusive position was the only defence between the Indians and utter exploitation, that if the Company's position were weakened the government would have to accept responsibility for the preservation of law and order at Red River, and he must either renew the licence or make other arrangements for government.

Faced with such an alternative even Glenelg yielded. On 30th May, 1838, the Company surrendered the unexpired four years of its 1821 licence and received a new licence for a further twenty-one years. The Company had a new lease of monopoly and, in the midst of so much uncertainty in colonial affairs, and especially in Canadian affairs, had secured a remarkable sign of government support and approval.

Not yet dignified by their baronetcy and knighthood, but secure in the support of the government, Simpson and Pelly had tried to cut through the endless negotiations by a journey to St. Petersburg and direct contact with the directors of the Russian American Company in the autumn of 1838. With no knowledge of Russian, they found the Company difficult to locate, and when eventually they managed to meet the directors they encountered only delays and evasions and reluctance to move without the advice of Baron Wrangell. The vexed issue of damages fell into the background, for the Russian Company turned out to be 'virtually a public institution' which could not discuss that affair without the foreign minister Count Nesselrode, who was away from St. Petersburg. While the diplomatic aspects seemed entirely in the hands of Nesselrode, questions of trade were closely controlled by Baron Wrangell, and when he had joined the discussions the two Englishmen concentrated on an attempt to secure an agreement which would reflect the ambitions of their traders on the coast. Pelly proposed that the two companies should trade only in their own territories and should forbid the sale of arms, ammunition and spirits, and that the Russians should buy their trade-goods from the Company. So the 'birds of passage' would be deprived of their opportunities

and the two companies could then settle down to organise their trade.

The prices at which the Hudson's Bay Company would supply goods seemed less important to Pelly and Simpson than the possibility of effecting such an agreement, but yet they negotiated shrewdly and firmly, with the price of wheat as the chief point of difference. During the talks Pelly discovered that the Russians had refused to renew the Americans' permit to trade on their coast and had decided to buy no more supplies from them. So although Wrangell kept saying that from California he could buy wheat on better terms than the Company offered, Pelly and Simpson knew that their main objective was gained. They tossed back the Russian attempts to cut the Company's prices, and told Wrangell he must accept their terms or drop the whole proposition for 'whatsoever the result of that proposition may be, the principal end is already attained'. But Wrangell in his turn held firm; not till he came to pay a personal visit on the eve of departure did the discussions take fire again. He then seized suddenly on Pelly's new proposal that the Hudson's Bay Company should supply the Russians at Sitka with the land-otter skins which they required. This would be a great advantage to the Russian Company, which needed such skins for the Russian market and would normally have to pay both competitive prices and import duties on them. So Wrangell developed to Simpson a proposal for a lease by which the Russians would hand over their southern coastal territories to the British in return for a rent payable in land-otters, and he and Simpson began to work out the details of such a bargain after Pelly and Simpson had returned to London in October.

Through the winter months the proposals took shape, with McLoughlin on hand to lend support and with both sides fully aware of the strength of the British position. For not only had the Company an almost irrefutable claim for damages (despite the delays) once Nesselrode had admitted that Ogden had been wrongfully halted at Stikine, but they knew that at a pinch they could throttle the trade on the coast by building posts and trading in the interior; Wrangell also was aware of this possibility, for Simpson purposefully told him that such posts were in hand. So the outlook was promising when in January 1839 Simpson, very much the master of the situation, wrote that the deal must be abandoned if it could not be concluded before he took ship back to Canada, and invited the Russian to come to London, or to meet him at some intermediate point such as Berlin. Wrangell had secured a concession

that the Company would supply any quantity of goods at a fifty per cent. advance on prime cost (whereas Simpson had been insistent that bulky goods of small value must pay an advance of seventy-five per cent.). But Simpson had gained his point that wheat was to cost two and a half dollars the *fanega* (of 126 lbs.) whereas Wrangell had stuck out for two and a quarter dollars only. Though Pelly had said the Company was not concerned for 'fractional niceties' of price, Simpson was driving a shrewd bargain!

Behind the merchandising lay the bigger proposal which Wrangell had opened up in St. Petersburg. Simpson took this up as a private matter between himself and Wrangell, and before he left London to meet Wrangell he had not been able to put it formally to his directors. He had, however, discussed it informally with Pelly and a few others who were in London during the Christmas season, and to them he put a scheme that the Russians should abandon their coast south of Mount Elias to the Hudson's Bay Company for twenty years, and should guarantee to the Company the exclusive trade of that coast for the same period. The Company should pay a rent of £4,000 sterling a year. But (and this was held as a necessary condition) no rent should be payable for the first three years; instead, the Company would waive its claim for damages for the Stikine affair. The Company was willing to supply up to 3,000 land-otters a year, and to supply grain and merchandise at agreed prices, or alternatively to freight goods for the Russians at agreed charges. But correspondence had not been able to solve differences as to whether the Russians meant to include the islands in their cession of the coast, whether they meant to retain Sitka or not, and whether they were prepared to admit the claim for damages at Stikine in any form.

These all seemed to Simpson matters which could be settled by two or three days of personal negotiation, and he proved right. He went to Berlin with the blessing of the Foreign Office, though Palmerston warned him that neither he nor the Company had the right to make any arrangements which would affect the rights of Her Majesty's Government. In fact the boot was on the other foot. It was the Russian Company which was preparing to lease away territory appertaining to Russia, and Simpson's instructions, formally ratified under the common seal of the Company, enabled him to exploit this situation, for while the British government warmly supported the Company, Nesselrode was confessing that he had exhausted all plausible pretexts over the Stikine claim and was suggesting that the Russian Company should seek a friendly settlement of the claim.

The Russian position in Europe was not such that she could risk a diplomatic rupture over so remote a problem; for in 1833 Russia had concluded the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi with Turkey and had secured the right to close the Dardanelles 'au besoin'. The Treaty gave Russia, as Nesselrode admitted, a right of armed intervention in Turkey, and through the summer of 1838 it was clear that a crisis was approaching in which such an intervention might well be called for and in which France and England might equally well enter the field against Russia. The Middle East crisis actually came to a head in April 1839, when Russia might have stepped in to assume a protective role for the Turks; but it had become clear that in so doing she would isolate herself from the whole of the rest of the European powers, and in July 1839 Russia subscribed, with Britain, France, Austria and Prussia, the famous 'accord' which promised joint action by those powers on the Eastern Question. Russia had averted a head-on clash.

This was diplomacy of a high order, in which the Near Eastern problem was brought to an uneasy solution against the background of a struggle between Britain and Russia for control of the approaches to India and for the trade of Asia—a struggle marked by the intrigues of Russian and British agents in Persia and Mesopotamia, by a commercial treaty signed between England and Turkey in August 1838, and by a Russian-sponsored move towards the Afghan frontier by Persia. It was accepted that the independence of Afghanistan was essential to the security of India, so a British expedition was sent to the Persian Gulf and there occupied a base from which an attack on Persia might be launched, and a British army (the Army of the Indus) was being assembled for a march into Afghanistan while Simpson and Pelly were negotiating in St. Petersburg. On the other side was a Russian expedition into Central Asia which failed at Kiva. Russia was following up her advance (in 1828) into Moldavia and Wallachia by expansion towards the Bosphorus, the Levant, and the Khanates of Central Asia. To those concerned and aware it seemed inevitable that 'our frontiers and those of Russia will touch—that is, the states dependent upon either of us will'.

Such developments seem far removed from the fur trade of the Alaskan coast, as indeed they were. But they meant that the correspondence between Simpson and Wrangell was in the hands of a jaunty and self-confident Simpson, who knew that the Colonial Office was in process of renewing the Company's licence and that the Foreign Office under Palmerston was alert and in support. On

the other side stood Wrangell, deprived of all power of manoeuvre by the Russian refusal to trade further with the Americans, while the Hudson's Bay Company was building down Stikine River, and behind him the Russian government was being forced to yield ground in Afghanistan, Persia and Turkey, from fear of driving Britain into a close alliance with France. The agreement reached by Simpson and Wrangell, as has been pointed out, cannot properly be said to have been dictated by the political considerations which moulded Russian policy and led Russia to accept the 'accord' of July 1839, for the Alaska coast arrangement was concluded before the governments were officially informed or consulted in detail. But if the actual terms were a result of the bargaining strength held by the two companies (as they were) that strength in its turn was undoubtedly affected by the diplomatic and military manoeuvres of the two governments. So, indirectly if not directly, the settlement of the coastal trade was in part determined by events in Afghanistan and in Turkey. The result was to give to the Company that exclusive position on the coast which it most required in order to develop its trade methods to their greatest productivity.

Simpson and Wrangell ultimately met in Hamburg (for Simpson missed the appointment in Berlin) at the end of January 1839, and as Simpson had expected they concluded their deal within a week. Their agreement, which the London Committee fully ratified, applied only to the mainland and not to the islands; but on the coast from Cape Spencer south to $54^{\circ} 40'$, and inland to a line from Cape Spencer to Mount Fairweather, the Russians ceded the trade and navigation for ten years from 1st June, 1840, and agreed even to abandon their own trade and posts there for that period. The British were to take over the Russian post at Point Highfield and were to be allowed to build their own posts also, to hand them over on the expiration of the agreement. In return the Hudson's Bay Company was to pay an annual rent of two thousand seasoned land-otter skins throughout the period. Simpson agreed not to trade furs on the Russian islands or on Russian territory to the north, and to sell up to a further two thousand land-otters from the west side of the Rockies at 23s. a skin and up to three thousand land-otters a year taken east of the mountains at 32s. a skin. There was some finesse in translating dollars into sterling, and *fanegas* into bushels, but on the whole Simpson got his way on the price of wheat. The Company agreed to supply two thousand *fanegas* in 1840, and four thousand *fanegas* in subsequent years, while flour, peas, barley, salt beef, salt butter and ham, were also to be provided at fixed prices. The Company's

agricultural establishments were to provide these supplies when possible, but in bad years the Company was to act as the agent through whom the Russians would buy from further south.

By these terms Simpson arranged that the Columbia Department might pay the cost of the newly-acquired monopoly from its own produce in furs and food, and he further agreed that the Company should act as transport agent, to ship trade-goods from England for the Russians at £13 a ton. This, however, was not to prevent the Russians from sending their own supply-ships from St. Petersburg whenever they wished; payments were to be made by bills of exchange drawn on St. Petersburg and the arrangements were to be honoured even if (as was quite possible) war should break out between the two countries, when the Russians would indemnify the British if they should be compelled to evacuate their posts on Russian territory.

Simpson had got the monopoly of the coastal trade, and had got it on very good terms. He could well afford the last clause of the agreement, in which the Company formally renounced its claim for injury and damage for the Stikine affair. He had achieved an arrangement which gave the Company an economic advantage over the Americans on the coast, and which gave to the Company the stability which went far to maintain it in the forefront as the ambitions of American traders were co-ordinated into a national American policy.

Not only had Simpson's agreement with Wrangell placed the Company in a favourable position—so favourable that Great Britain was offered the prior option on buying the Russian possessions in North America, before they were sold to the United States—he had also greatly increased his own stature in so doing. Already knighted, as a sign that his importance was recognised in governmental circles, he followed up his journey to St. Petersburg by his journey round the world in 1841–2. It was a journey almost entirely in the northern hemisphere, and after crossing from Montreal to Fort Vancouver Simpson thoroughly investigated the Pacific coast, with two visits to the Russian establishments, a voyage to San Francisco and to Honolulu, to finish by crossing Siberia from Okhotsk to Novgorod and Moscow. Such a voyage was unparalleled in the 1840's, and Simpson was no ordinary traveller but a keen observer—if perhaps a sententious writer! He emerged as the most knowledgeable expert, without challenge, whom government could possibly consult in the imminent crisis of the Oregon boundary dispute.

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CHAPTER XXIV

SETTLEMENT, AND NATIONAL RIVALRY, IN THE COLUMBIA

In the negotiations with the Russians, and in the rivalry with the Americans of which those negotiations were part, as joint-elements in the Company's efforts to maintain a frontier, ability to produce grain on the Columbia was as strong an argument as ability to produce salmon or timber for shipment to the islands. In this the Company had chosen its ground well, and was well served by its Chief Factor, for John McLoughlin developed into a far-sighted and competent agriculturist.

In a way there was nothing startling or original in this development, for throughout its history the Company had endeavoured to cut costs of provisions by encouraging farming. The heavy consumption of European food had been one of the first things which Simpson noticed as he cast his eye over the Company's western posts, and the fertility of Jolie Prairie had been very much in his mind when he chose it as the site for Fort Vancouver in 1825. But whereas at Red River the original urge had been Selkirk's desire to found a colony, and the fur trade had then come into the picture as the colonists encroached upon the pemmican trade, on the Columbia the process was reversed. From the beginning of the Simpson-McLoughlin reorganisation of the Columbia Department, provisions for the fur trade were a main objective, and the agricultural development which was thus stimulated led to an agricultural colonising movement.

In both areas the interdependence of fur trade and colonisation was further complicated by the expansive nationalism of the United States. But here again there was a difference; for whereas the Red River problems were affected by an almost fully achieved American settlement of Minnesota and the American prairie lands, the problems of the Columbia were complicated by American projects and ambitions, not by established settlements. This was so from the start. When Simpson visited the Columbia for the second time, in 1828, he had learned from Jedediah Smith that flattering reports of the Willamette valley had attracted the attention of many Americans. Smith himself well knew how difficult was the journey from St. Louis westwards. But general opinion in America accepted the error that the Willamette (or Multnomah) rose in the Rockies, so that

settlers would only have to embark on rafts at the Height of Land and glide at their ease for eight hundred or a thousand miles to their 'Land of Promise'. In fact, Simpson reported, the Willamette rose only a hundred and fifty miles from Fort Vancouver, it could only be approached across a sandy desert, and the approach from America by way of Lewis River seemed equally impossible for settlers. So in 1828, 'unless the all grasping policy of the American Government, should induce it, to embark some of its National Wealth, in furtherance of the object', Simpson felt that the Company had little to fear from American settlers.

Simpson was never a man to understate his case, and he proved too optimistic in his conviction that private settlers could not overcome the difficulties of the journey. But for some years events seemed to justify him. As early as 1831 a plan to colonise the Willamette valley was published in a Boston newspaper, and a party of thirty-five men set off under the leadership of a 'Mr. Dwight' of Boston—probably Nathaniel Wyeth. 'Dwight' eventually arrived at Fort Vancouver with only eleven men in October 1832. Several men had left him to join American trapping parties, and he had suffered both from lack of supplies and from Blackfoot opposition as he came. His men were inexperienced and ill-supplied; they had been sold provisions *en route* by the Hudson's Bay men, and they had found the prices extortionate—so much so that McLoughlin thought it best to order that any further parties should get such supplies free since 'we lose more in character than the thing is worth'. Wyeth said his intention was to make a living by curing salmon and supplying provisions to American trappers in the Rockies, and he confessed himself disappointed on his arrival and proposed to withdraw to San Francisco. But McLoughlin suspected a colonising venture in 1832, and in the next year he was expecting a further and more substantial colonising movement.

For this McLoughlin had two sources of information. From Indians and traders he heard that an American party was coming down the Salmon River in skin canoes, and he feared that many of them must inevitably be drowned. And from Duncan Finlayson at Oahu he heard (as did the Governor and Committee) that two hundred families, including some Indians, were on their way overland, under military escort, to settle on the Columbia or Willamette. As yet the Company's own farming had not got under way, and Duncan Finlayson sent extra beef from Oahu since he thought the Willamette settlers must have arrived and would provide a market.

The threat of American settlement was beginning to take colour,

and McLoughlin thought he knew the areas which would be most attractive. Simpson was delighted at the 'means of subsistence' which were got at Fort Vancouver by the time of his second visit in 1828, but McLoughlin reckoned even then (as he reported that subsistence was still principally on salmon and imported provisions) that the best soil was to be found beside the Willamette and at Puget Sound. As the defects of Fort Vancouver became more evident, and as American settlers became so much of a reality that Finlayson wrote in 1832 that the Company would ultimately have to remove them and that a firm boundary would have to be agreed, McLoughlin therefore sent Archibald McDonald to examine the soil of the portage of Puget Sound and of the open country along the shore. Primarily the survey was to determine whether agriculture there would be profitable. But the convenience of shipping was also in mind, and when in 1833 McLoughlin had heard from Francis Heron that the soil at Puget Sound was poor and unsuitable for tillage he reminded him that 'the main object of the Establishment is not farming and that it is formed in consequence of the American Coasters of late years frequently visiting the Straights of De Fuca which obliged us to keep a party constantly in Puget Sound—and if by being stationary it can also attend a farm so much the better'.

So, as settlers from America began to seem a serious possibility, the Company began to take in agricultural land. As yet McLoughlin hoped that Fort Langley with its salmon fishery and Nisqually with its farm would supply all the provisions needed for the posts on the coast, but he ordered cattle to be sent to Puget Sound and to Fort Langley.

The Americans in the meantime had received a new and significant reinforcement. In 1834 there came early in October the brig *May Dacre* from Boston, while in September Wyeth came again overland from Boston with twenty-four men, a British army officer (Captain Sir William Stewart), two American naturalists and two American Methodist missionaries. The ship and Captain Wyeth were nothing new; they were the follow-up of the party of the previous year and McLoughlin, assured that they would not try to trade, had told Pambrun at the Walla Walla post to show Wyeth the 'usual attentions'. He already thought that 'It is very Probable we will enter into an understanding to avoid opposition' with Wyeth; and though Wyeth now included in his proposals an intention to farm in the Willamette McLoughlin was easy. Comforted by the news that the captain of a ship which had come into the Columbia with supplies in readiness for the missionaries had refused to trade

with Indians, he took no alarm as the missionaries settled in the Willamette, devoting themselves to the Indians, and announcing that they expected to be joined by more Americans in the next year. Nor was McLoughlin alarmed at the arrival from California of Hall Jackson Kelly, the Boston schoolmaster who was trying to form an American colonisation society to settle in the Willamette.

To the new-comers McLoughlin showed the same hospitality, whether they came by sea, across the Rockies, or up from California. The Methodists, the Reverend Jason Lee and his nephew Daniel Lee, were given a room in the post and were allowed to buy goods from the Company's store at an advance of a hundred per cent. on prime costs. This was an advance warranted by freight costs (the Russians were unable to get Simpson to go below a seventy-five per cent. advance and had ultimately settled for £13 a ton as a normal freight-charge), and McLoughlin argued that the missionaries got no pay and devoted themselves to their task from a desire to do good; their servants received high rates of pay, and had to pay more for their goods at the Company's store. The only one of his visitors with whom McLoughlin was at all cold was the ne'er-do-well Englishman Ashworth, alleged to be the son of a prominent lawyer, who had been living from hand to mouth among the American trappers until the missionaries came through, and who then came on with them to the coast. He 'gate-crashed' McLoughlin's hospitality until he was firmly told that the Chief Factor's house was not an hotel and was put out of the fort, to live on salmon and biscuit or salmon and potatoes until he could get a passage to Oahu. To the rest the fort was open, even to Joachim (i.e. Ewing) Young who arrived from California under the shadow of an accusation of horse-stealing.

For McLoughlin American settlement, American coastal trade, and American trapping in the interior were three distinct issues. Settlement he regarded kindly, especially under missionary auspices, and he seems to have shared Simpson's view that it would not develop into a serious threat to the fur trade. There was much to justify this view, for even when McLoughlin had accepted that 'as the country becomes settled the Fur trade must diminish', he argued that it was sound policy to settle retired married men, provided they had at least fifty pounds' worth of stock, since they would otherwise support the Company's rivals. The country from Puget Sound to San Francisco must one day be settled, for it seemed to McLoughlin to be better than anything Canada or New York could offer. So the choice lay between encouraging the settlement of retired servants

who would be grateful to the Company, or of recalcitrants who would feel very differently inclined.

As far as the missionaries were concerned McLoughlin saw the choice as between granting them favourable terms, cheap freight and friendly assistance, or leaving them to organise their own supplies, bring in their own ship to the Columbia and so lead to adventurers who would 'open shop in opposition to us, Give us an Immensity of trouble, and Make us Incur great Expense'. McLoughlin was convinced that the missionaries could not in any case be prevented, that they ought in fact to be encouraged, and that their goodwill ought to be secured. He made his reservations; flogging should be kept as a punishment, and stern retribution must follow swiftly on offences against whites. 'Nine out of ten of the Indians brought about our Establishment become Scamps', and they should never be taken to civilised countries. But he proclaimed himself a friend to educating Indians on practical lines—which meant 'to teach him Religion and Morality, to accustom him to work, and to teach him to till the ground, by means of which he can support himself, and which he should be taught on his own lands. As to reading and writing Tho' most useful in civilised Society, of what use can they be to an Indian at Walla Walla'.

This attitude of McLoughlin's did not indicate any weakening in his approach to opposition in the fur trade. P. C. Pambrun commanded at Walla Walla, to which the American trappers turned for food and supplies when their own flimsy arrangements failed. He was to sell no food to anyone, and was to trade goods only at the same standard as would apply if he were dealing direct with Indians; and he was to have no dealings at all with Captain Bonneville of the United States Army, who had appeared as a fur-trader in 1832 but who appeared to McLoughlin liable to founder for lack of goods.

This was a view with which Simpson, and the Governor and Committee, found it difficult to quarrel. But knowing the way in which priests and agriculturists at Red River had led to independent traders and so to trouble, they were less favourable than McLoughlin. Such agricultural development as was to be favoured ought, if possible, to be kept under Company control. So when McLoughlin proposed an independent Hide and Tallow Company and protested that there was nothing in the Deed Poll to prevent him from investing in it, or any other branch of business except trade with Indians, and protested equally strongly that the Company itself could not embark on such a trade since it clearly was not a branch of the fur trade and the commissioned officers could properly object to

it, the Company (strongly advised by Simpson) took the matter under control. Simpson held that the Company could engage in cattle-rearing on the banks of the Willamette, at Cowlitz Portage, and elsewhere, and that it should do so. The Governor and Committee put a firm veto on McLoughlin's proposal; they had a right to the full devotion of their servants, and such a company must in the long run prove detrimental to the fur trade. For the moment, in 1834 and 1835, as the renewal of Licence for Exclusive Trade was under active discussion with the Colonial Office, a small sum, £300, was sent for the purchase of cattle, and McLoughlin was urged to dispose of it in an establishment north of the river—for preference at Whidbey's Island at the head of Puget Sound—but little more was done.

While the Company was uncertain of its position on the Columbia, and American settlers were so few and so unobjectionable, McLoughlin's tolerance caused little comment though Simpson was rash enough to suggest that the missionaries should withdraw from the Company's posts and provide their own quarters. McLoughlin immediately replied that the only case in point (in 1836) was that of the Presbyterian Mr. Parker, who had arrived alone and destitute, and over sixty years old, in 1835; McLoughlin would have earned 'a merited Load of Obloquy' had he refused food and lodging.

But the feeling that McLoughlin might be less entirely devoted to the Company than was proper was spreading, and while his attitude towards settlers and missionaries was as yet accepted, his attitude towards coastal rivalry, the second major issue, was not. He had already run into trouble over his proposed arrangement with Captain Dominis, over his purchase of the *Lama* and employment of Captain McNeill, and over the suspicion that he preferred to buy out an opposition on the coast rather than to out-trade and ruin it. His arrangement with Nathaniel Wyeth brought this aspect of his policy out into the open.

From his first visit to the Columbia in 1832, Wyeth had apparently got on well with McLoughlin, and when he returned in 1834, in effective strength to put his salmon-curing scheme into operation, McLoughlin quickly made a temporary agreement with him. This, however, did not commit McLoughlin to supporting the American. The Chief Factor summarised the agreement as an arrangement 'provided I would not put obstacles in the way of his Salting Salmon, and buying a few Horses, that he would not interfere with our trade, nor allow any of his people to do so'.

But the agreement was more far-reaching than this; in letters

to his subordinates McLoughlin explained his arrangement in the necessary detail, and made it clear that in 1834 Wyeth was no longer interested only in salmon and, perhaps, in colonisation. During his winter, 1832-3, at Fort Vancouver, as he enjoyed McLoughlin's hospitality, the American had concluded that there was scope for an agreement by which the Company should outfit him to trap south of the Columbia, perhaps in territory to which British trapping parties had no access. But McLoughlin then would listen to no such proposal. Salmon and settlement were distinct, in his mind, from the fur trade; and he sent Wyeth a firm refusal. Wyeth, however, was not convinced. On his way eastwards he was strongly impressed by the rivalry which was being organised within the American fur trade.

The American Fur Company itself had come into the west in great strength, while Sublette and Campbell had come up the Missouri in boats and had set up their posts in opposition. Both major contestants were well supplied with goods, horses, arms and servants, and there were also several small independent parties in the field, so that Wyeth could foresee both a strongly organised rivalry to the Company and much irregular opposition. Wyeth's pride rose at the strength of his countrymen. But at the same time he wrote that 'there is here a great majority of Scoundrels, I should much doubt the personal safety of any one from your side the house without a strong party'. He wrote to Simpson, therefore, to repeat the offer which McLoughlin had turned down, with emphasis on the advantages which the Company might get from outfitting him, an American citizen, to trade south of the Columbia. But Simpson was always emphatic that west of the Rockies the American fur-traders must be driven out of business, not bought out, and he rejected the proposal out of hand.

Wyeth, nevertheless, on his second journey to the Pacific, had brought with him supplies of trade-goods which the Rocky Mountain Fur Company had agreed to take off him. When, on his arrival at the American rendezvous, he found this agreement repudiated, he decided to set up shop for himself with the goods and established his own post, Fort Hall, on the left bank of the Snake River, a few miles above the mouth of Portneuf River. So when Wyeth arrived at Fort Vancouver, and was quickly followed by his ship the *May Dacre* in 1834, McLoughlin was faced by a rival who had a well-sited and well-stocked post and a ship-load of goods, instead of by a mere speculative adventurer. He had not yet received a copy of the letter in which Simpson had peremptorily turned down Wyeth's proposals and, acting on his own analysis of the situation, McLoughlin made

an arrangement with Wyeth in which he agreed to share some of the fur trade. For McLoughlin agreed with Wyeth that the American should not trade beyond the Grand Ronde River (a tributary of the Snake) while the Hudson's Bay expeditions would also respect that frontier except for parties led by Francis Ermatinger and Thomas McKay, and that Wyeth should supply these parties if they called upon him. McLoughlin had, in fact, agreed to divide the Snake Country with Wyeth in much the same way as Simpson had agreed to respect the interests of the American Fur Company south of Red River, and he even ordered the Walla Walla (Nez Percés) post to assist Wyeth in small matters.

McLoughlin's agreement with Wyeth ran him into serious trouble with Simpson, and with the Governor and Committee. Yet it did not greatly diverge from the principles by which Ogden had been empowered to agree on zones of influence with the Americans in the Snake Country, or from the way in which Francis Ermatinger had been sent to the Snakes in 1832 'more properly on a trading expedition than hunting' (as McLoughlin wrote) to trade supplies with American trappers for the furs which they had taken. But hard on the heels of his agreement, early in October 1834, came the *Eagle* with dispatches from England, including a copy of Simpson's rebuff to Wyeth and orders to McLoughlin that if Wyeth appeared again he must meet him by steady, well-regulated, opposition. Considering the extent to which his agreement had contravened this instruction (before he had received it), McLoughlin's summary of the arrangement was brief to the point of truculence and disingenuousness. But he was genuinely convinced that his course was the best possible, and soon there were proofs of his wisdom, for Wyeth had arrived too late for the salmon fishery in 1834, he had done badly in 1835, he and his men had suffered from fever, and at Fort Hall he had traded only six hundred beaver. By September 1835 Wyeth was ready to quit a losing trade, and McLoughlin was confident that he had kept for the Company all of the trade which mattered and that he had side-stepped a dangerous threat, for 'Wyeth had only to tap a puncheon of Rum and open a Bale of Goods to make us spend hundreds to secure the trade'.

The result, according to McLoughlin, had been achieved for the very reason which had made the agreement seem worth-while in the first place. Wyeth was a reputable man who had kept his word and had not harmed the Company's trade; so he provided the same sort of shield against unprincipled competition as the American Fur Company provided in the east. He had no hesitation in telling the

Committee that they did not appear to have understood the arrangement, and he boldly declared that Simpson and the Council had not mastered the necessary information, and that he proposed to follow his own plan. This was in 1836, by which time Wyeth had already begun to falter; and McLoughlin had been confirmed in his views by the answers to a circular letter which he had sent to his chief subordinates—‘Will you please to inform me if you think the Agreement I made with him was the most efficient and economical way for the concern to oppose him?’

This was an invitation to quarrel with their masters which the Chief Traders might well have declined. But only Robert Cowie was at all equivocal, and even he admitted that the arrangement had been ‘so far productive of benefits to the Concern’; when pressed by McLoughlin he refused to accept it as necessarily a final solution. The others were quite outspoken; McLeod thought the arrangement the most efficient and economical which could have been adopted, and James Douglas wrote enthusiastically of ‘the only solitary example which the Fur Trade can produce of a rival trading company being held in check during two years, and being finally compelled to give up the contest, solely by the agency of masterly arrangement, and without pecuniary expense or sacrifice of character’. McLoughlin, supported by his subordinates, was in no mood to brook interference. In terms reminiscent of Governor Nixon and James Knight in the seventeenth century he told the Governor and Committee that he had often found it necessary to act in opposition to the views of those who should have had the same interest as himself, and that ‘Whoever the person is in charge of the Business of this Department he will Require your Confidence and support to be able to carry it on with Advantage to the Company and Credit to himself’.

But for all his rising obstinacy, McLoughlin never relaxed in his opposition to Wyeth. There was no question as to the need for opposition, only as to the best means; and even in allowing Wyeth his zone for trade McLoughlin claimed that since the American had goods (for the brig *May Dacre* had brought them in 1834) he would certainly get rid of them somewhere. It was therefore better to give him an outlet and in so doing to use him as a protection from the intrusions of other rivals. The Snake Country expeditions which were sent out were therefore told to honour the agreement with Wyeth, and not to go east of the mountains, and though they were told to set up a post on Boise River (sometimes called Snake Fort) because Wyeth’s post at Fort Hall might detract from the trade of Walla

Walla, they were also told to try to agree with Wyeth on a standard of trade which would preclude competition. At the same time McLoughlin judiciously opposed Wyeth in the salmon fishery although he kept his word and did not raise the price, and he demurred at supplying the American. In the end, convinced that Wyeth would in any case send a strong party to the Snake Country and that it was sound policy to encourage him to do business in territory to which the Company had no access, that it was sensible to make all they could from south of the Columbia while it lay in their power, and that there were good profits to be made by selling goods to Wyeth and taking furs from him, McLoughlin agreed to send up an outfit for him to Fort Hall in spring 1837.

This was going much further even than the agreement to partition the Snake Country trade which had already got McLoughlin into trouble. It was an interim local acceptance of a major change in policy, pending reference to London. Wyeth had suggested that McLoughlin should outfit him for trade on the upper waters of the Snake River and the lands to the eastward and southward, furnishing country produce at the local cost, horses and men at cost price, European goods at an advance of seventy-five per cent. on prime cost plus charges up to £700 a year. Wyeth would then deliver all his furs at Fort Vancouver at £1 per merchantable beaver of a pound weight, he would agree to abandon Fort Hall if required, and he would agree to make no post on the Columbia or any of its waters without consent of the Company, and not to trade on Snake River below Fort Hall. His aim was to trade on the Salt Lake, the Colorado, the del Norte and 'the Rivers of the Atlantic'. With a minor revision on the price of beaver, and with the stipulation that Fort Hall should in any case be abandoned, McLoughlin thought these proposals reasonable, and forwarded them to the Governor and Committee.

At the same time Wyeth was so near to the end of his tether that he hoped to sell out, and his proposal to McLoughlin was really a new opening; so it was not quite certain which way Wyeth would move. Nor was it at all certain that the Governor and Committee would accept the proposal, and in fact their dispatch of January 1837 carried another denunciation of McLoughlin's 'arrangements' policy and a further exhortation to the most vigorous opposition. The Snake expeditions were therefore warned that if Wyeth came with an order for an outfit from the Governor and Committee they must of course comply with it, that in the meantime they must not trade with men who might be under contract to him,

but that 'if he comes in opposition, of course you will know what to do'.

In the event, Wyeth sold out completely to the Company during the winter of 1836-7; McLoughlin was not aware of this, but he acted on his own and bought Fort Hall and all of Wyeth's property, including a whiskey still. His policy would appear to have been completely vindicated, and he might seem to have earned the generous thanks of the Governor and Committee, especially since at this very time Simpson was negotiating a parallel agreement with the American Fur Company by which a boundary was arranged from Pembina to Lake Superior, the Company paid a cash sum of £300 on account of the previous agreement of 1833, and it was accepted that Ramsay Crooks, on behalf of the American Fur Company, would set up posts on the shores of Lake Superior for fishing and for curing fish, and that Indians would trade furs at those posts. Simpson was also ready to negotiate a partition of the trade of Eskimo Bay at just this time. Yet McLoughlin was told that the over-riding need was for a strong establishment west of the mountains, and that the Company should be able to outbid all opposition and to make its posts pay. Even if some loss were incurred during the process of driving opponents to the wall, Simpson and the Governor and Committee thought it would be well worth while.

In the east Simpson was dealing with an area in which the missionaries and settlers had already wrought a change, and in which the free trade in furs made it impossible to retain a monopoly, so that the American Fur Company proved a strong and reputable ally against the small traders. Moreover Wyeth was himself only one such small trader; and when Simpson heard of Wyeth's failure, in October 1836, he was in New York and he was aware that already another similar expedition was being fitted out to trade on the north-west coast. The only answer was to ensure that such expeditions made losses; vigorous opposition was to be the rule, even if it meant a 'sacrifice of money'.

Great as were the changes which he had wrought in the Columbia Department, by the time he had secured the defeat of Wyeth McLoughlin was at odds with Simpson and with the Governor and Committee. He knew that he had 'stepped boldly out of the beaten path of routine' and had combated the views of many important people, and when in 1836 the Governor and Committee sanctioned a grant which the Northern Council had proposed some two years previously McLoughlin could not resist the chance to accept the honorarium as a sign of approbation of his conduct, and soothing to

his feelings on that account. His shipping policy was at variance, for he disliked the idea of the steamer and wanted posts rather than ships, his venture to Sitka had landed in trouble, his Snake Country policy was suspect, and above all he had shown an independence of mind and of judgment which were thought to be dangerous in the extreme. The strength of the organisation which Simpson had built up lay in its unity and its flexibility, its capacity to sustain losses in one area in order to safeguard another in which the fur-bearing animals might be recruited or in which a trade might be driven at monopoly profits. Lack of discipline in such an organisation could prove dangerous, especially if it should be allied to a forceful and attractive personality, a readiness to appeal to the Deed Poll, and tolerance for immigration, settlement and private traders.

All of these things were present in McLoughlin's management of the Columbia. By the time he came to England in 1838, the weak spot seemed to be his tolerance of American settlement. But in the preceding years the affair of Wyeth had brought out many disquieting features, and McLoughlin had clearly revealed an intolerant irascibility which made him doubly suspect.

The occasion for his main outburst was the arrival, in September 1836 at Fort Vancouver, of a Church of England chaplain who was also to act as a missionary, and was if he so wished to accompany the brigades inland. What puckish whim had induced the staid Governor and Committee to choose a candidate with the name of the Reverend Herbert Beaver will probably never be known; but the choice was not a wise one, for neither Beaver nor his wife proved capable of moderating their set habits of thought and conduct to the standards of the fur-traders. Within weeks of his arrival Beaver was complaining of the lack of accommodation, for he had to perform his services in the mess-room and to hold his school there too; and of the lack of attention to himself. McLoughlin, Douglas, Rae, Tolmie and Allan boycotted his services and held their own 'conventicle' in the office as a sign that they respected religion, but not in the form purveyed by their official chaplain, and Beaver almost begged a return passage on the first ship home but was persuaded to stay on in the hope that McLoughlin would be replaced by Finlayson and all would be well.

The rapid development of the quarrel stemmed from a clash of intransigent personalities. Beaver had lost no time in making a formal demand for a schoolmaster, a schoolroom and other amenities, and he followed this up by curtly informing Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding, wives of American missionaries who had hitherto

helped in the school, that the school was part of his parochial duties, and dispensed with their services. This roused McLoughlin, who asked Beaver to call on him and, when the latter declined, claimed 'that necessary degree of deference to his wishes which is equally demanded by the state of the Settlement and due through his office to the Honble Company'. To which Beaver replied by an appeal from McLoughlin to the Company! At the same time Beaver was complaining of his allowances of food and of wine. He was getting the same allowances as a senior officer, and McLoughlin emphasised the dangers of 'an irregular or intemperate mode of living', read prayers despite Beaver for the Canadians and the Roman Catholics, and was adamant that Beaver's insistence upon Church of England teaching made it necessary to take the school from his control.

In most of this Beaver showed up very badly, especially since he made no attempt to act as a missionary towards the Indians, while McLoughlin kept his temper and wrote and acted with a heavy sarcasm rather than with the blistering irritation which the smug selfishness of Beaver might well have evoked. But when Beaver began to take note of the morals of the community, his principles and his animosities ran together. As a priest he had little choice left to him, for whatever might be said in favour of 'Indian marriage' as an institution when no priests were available to solemnise a Christian union he was bound to maintain that such customary unions ought to be legitimatised as soon as the Church was on hand to do so. Most of the officers attached to the fort had their Indian 'wives', including McLoughlin himself, and although some of the unions had been regularised by definite arrangements (later justified in the law courts) others were promiscuous and irregular by any standards. To Herbert Beaver all alike were sinful and he brought such as he could, including James Douglas and his 'wife', to the altar. But McLoughlin would not accept the slur on his 'wife' which a marriage by Beaver would seem to imply; and his 'wife' was in a particularly vulnerable position for she had come to him while her previous consort, Alexander McKay of the North West Company and then of the Pacific Fur Company, was still alive. McKay had deserted her, and he had subsequently been killed on the ill-fated *Tonquin*; and she had been with McLoughlin for twenty-five years before Beaver came to the Columbia. But to Beaver Marguerite Wadin McKay McLoughlin was 'a female of notoriously loose character', 'the kept Mistress of the highest personage in your service at this station'. When McLoughlin learned of this description of his wife he thoroughly

lost his temper. Meeting Beaver in the yard of the fort, he kicked him soundly, drubbed his back, and took his own stick to beat him with. Beaver and his wife were rightly terrified, for McLoughlin was threatening murder, and anything might have happened if on-lookers had not intervened.

This climax came just as McLoughlin was on the eve of departure for England in 1838. It was quite obvious that Beaver had been an unfortunate choice and that McLoughlin had been justified in most of his actions. But he had shown an intractable side to his character which reinforced the suspicions roused by his obstinacy over shipping, over Wyeth and over American settlement. It says much that the Committee re-appointed him to the Columbia when his work in England was done, for his proposal to outfit Wyeth as an independent trader, his proposals to start an independent Beef and Tallow Company, and his conduct of the Snake expeditions, all threw grave doubts on McLoughlin's loyalty to the concept of a united fur trade which could claim complete loyalty from all its officials as well as the complete trade of the territories assigned to it.

When McLoughlin had sent Ermatinger into the Snake Country in 1832, to trade as best he could with the American trappers, he had made a serious innovation, for Ermatinger was to act independently; and when in succession to Ermatinger in 1834 he sent his own stepson Thomas McKay (Marguerite Wadin's son) he was confirming the practice with a strong suspicion of family favouritism. McKay was resolute, experienced, and a magnificent traveller; he was a fine shot and a terror to the Indians, and he had had much experience of the Snake Country. But Simpson thought he was not a leader, that he had little judgment and was a confirmed liar; and in 1834 McLoughlin had decided to allow his stepson to retire from the service and to settle as a farmer on the Willamette—a course which caused the Governor and Committee to order that no further settlements by retired servants should be allowed without their permission. Then McLoughlin accepted the opinion of Ogden and Work that a trapping party in the Snake Country would no longer pay the Company. Yet he equipped McKay with an outfit on similar lines to those enjoyed by Ermatinger—similar too, to the way in which Simpson had equipped Montour at Colville House in 1829—and sent him to trade with the American trappers rather than to trap furs himself. This venture was safeguarded in the agreement which McLoughlin made with Wyeth, but when McKay found Wyeth firmly entrenched at Fort Hall he was ignorant of this arrangement, and he feared that Wyeth's intervention would ruin his project.

McLoughlin, anxious to keep McKay in the field as a rival to Wyeth, therefore urged his stepson to great efforts while at the same time he transferred the outfit back to the Company's account and promised to 'come between him and Losses'. So when the venture had seemed in serious danger of making a loss, McLoughlin had accepted it as a necessary part of the Company's policy though when profits had seemed probable he had been content to outfit McKay for the purpose. In fairness it must be said that McLoughlin maintained he had offered the assignment to others but had got no acceptances.

McKay's arrangements with his men were nevertheless his own concern, and with them he entered into ill-defined partnerships which spread the subsidisation of private traders even more widely than McLoughlin had intended. He missed the Americans at their rendezvous but saw some of them during the winter, which he passed near Wyeth's post at Fort Hall. Ermatinger managed to recover some advances which McLoughlin had made to Americans in the previous year; he conducted his expedition entirely to McLoughlin's satisfaction and brought back important information, especially about a further party of American missionaries. McKay, though not so successful, cleared about three hundred pounds (according to McLoughlin) for the Company, and he was sent in again in 1835, McLoughlin claiming that a few trappers and a suitable outfit were the best means of keeping the opposition at bay. But in 1835 McLoughlin was so uncertain in his touch that he had to tell McKay that whether his party 'will be on your own account, or of the Company, or what quantity of goods I will be able to afford it, I cannot say'.

In 1835 McKay made towards Utah, and McLoughlin got news of him once during the winter, towards Blackfoot River. His outfit that year, valued at £1,609 including wages, produced a profit of £411 2s. 6d., which McLoughlin thought very satisfactory. His returns were brought out by John McLeod, who had met McKay inland, given him his outfit 'on his account as the last', and accompanied him to the American rendezvous before McKay set off for the southern Snake Country. McLeod was instructed (as was McKay) that he must observe the agreement with Wyeth, but since there was an obvious possibility in 1836 that Wyeth might cease to be a desirable ally, he was to collect information, and he was to try to get the American trappers to combine among themselves so that a boundary might be drawn and the Company might agree to sell them their supplies, instead of opposing them.

By this time McLoughlin's arrangement with Wyeth and his whole policy of opposition on the coast and south of the Columbia were under fire, and his instructions from the Governor and Council of the Northern Department were 'that no party be outfitted from the Companys store unless commanded by one of our officers Equiped on the Companys Account and Wholly Under the Companys Direction'. This cut across McLoughlin's agreements with Wyeth and with McKay, and his instructions to McKay, McLeod and Ermatinger, and he went into a detailed and defiant defence of his plan. But even McLoughlin was by 1836 beginning to doubt McKay's wisdom. He left it to McLeod to decide whether McKay's party should go to Utah or not, insisted that McKay must keep a journal and must do nothing without consulting McLeod, and rather apologetically told the latter to give his advice to McKay for 'he is neither huffish or conceited; and I am mistaken if he does not take it as it is intended, in good part'. It was, we may feel, almost with a sense of relief that McLoughlin passed on the veto on independent outfits and told his stepson that he could therefore be engaged once more as a regular servant of the Company at £100 a year if he wished.

But the pattern of trade for which McLoughlin was striving was something apart from the personalities and family connections in which it was enmeshed. He was still convinced, in November 1836, that the best way to get returns from the country south of the Columbia, already closely hunted, would be to equip the best American leaders. This conviction he put to the Governor and Committee regardless of the opposition of Simpson and the Council, and as he strongly recommended Wyeth's proposals in 1837 he continued to hope that McKay might receive the same amenities as Wyeth, since he also would carry on business 'beyond the reach of the present Establishment'. He promised McKay that, if Wyeth should be given an outfit in 1837, McKay also should get one, with the proviso that if the Governor and Committee still refused all such outfits, he could be employed as a clerk; and he still told McLeod that, in 1837, 'Our object in your going there is, not to trade a few skins from the common men, but to open a business with the leaders, which may be advantageous to them and to us, by supplying them with Goods on cheaper terms than they can by anyone else'.

The policy had much to be said for it, and ultimately its wisdom or folly would depend on the attitude towards the Company which the Committee hoped to create in the minds of the Americans. Simpson and the Governor and Committee thought that opposition

and hostility must eventually result; therefore delays, opposition and a ruinously competitive trade, must be the Company's policy. McLoughlin hoped to win the goodwill of the Americans, and he sought some form of neighbourly co-habitation; so his policy differed on fundamental principles which were obscured in the correspondence because McLoughlin, turgid, obstinate and confused in contrast with Simpson's suave clarity, constantly defended his policy for reasons which were temporary and at a tangent to this main issue.

Though the long-term wisdom and breadth of view of his policy were more than McLoughlin could properly express (indeed the more he tried to defend himself the more indefensible he appeared) yet he had a feeling for the realities of his problem. This was clearly brought out in a letter which McLeod brought back from Captain Sir William Stewart, the well-connected traveller who had come across the continent in 1834 with the Americans of that year. Stewart had talked with Wyeth, and with the American missionaries, and he strongly advocated a policy of conciliation, for if the Americans were pestered by opposition their ultimate recourse must be to ask their government to draw a firm boundary and to end the period of joint occupation. 'It appears to me', Stewart wrote, 'that a forbearance of the H.B. Co. in urging their rights to opposition in this quarter would be only good policy as no profit that could be drawn from an exhausted country could compensate them for the loss they might sustain from any alteration of the existing treaty'.

McLoughlin had got hold of a very sound and important consideration, and was likely to ruin his case by the way in which he advocated it, and by his ill-concealed dislike of intervention from Simpson or anyone from outside the Columbia. His visit to England in 1838 showed his worth to the Committee. Though it was Simpson who had hammered out a working arrangement with the Russians, McLoughlin was able to make many points. Whereas in 1837, for example, the Committee had regretted Herbert Beaver's disrespect and his insistence on his wines and spirits but had told the officers to set an example of propriety and public worship and had thought McLoughlin's interference with the school ill-judged, in 1838 Beaver was told that a proper attention to the duties of his office alone, and command of his temper, would obviate any quarrel with McLoughlin, with whom the Committee had discussed the affair. Beaver might come home at any time; but his claims were closely scrutinised and he was forced to accept £110 in complete satisfaction.

But though the delay of a year in McLoughlin's journey to England had given Beaver a chance to prove his ineptitude, and to rouse hostility by sending direct to Simpson a 'Report' which the Governor immediately sent to McLoughlin while he gave the chaplain a sharp reproof for evasiveness, it had also given McLoughlin time to show still further how dangerous a subordinate he was. Having incurred so much reproof for the way in which he had bought the *Lama* for the coastal trade and taken Captain McNeill into the service, a less opinionated man would have accepted the Company's declared policy of vigorous opposition and no 'arrangements' on the coast. McLoughlin, however, fuming at the number of ships which were thrust upon him when he was convinced that two ships and a series of shore posts could do the business, had determined by 1836 to sell the *Lama*. At the end of that year he sent John McLeod in the *Lama* to San Francisco with a cargo of timber and corn, to see if she could be sold there. McLeod was also to find out the regulations under which the Company might get a permit to hunt the sea-otter on the coast of California. There was no sale for the ship, and it was discovered that the government of California would demand one third of the catch as the price of a licence to hunt the sea-otter. The *Lama* was therefore sent on a further voyage with timber, to Oahu, where the Company's representative George Pelly, acting on instructions from McLoughlin, sold her to Captain John Bancroft.

Like so many of McLoughlin's actions, this was not a simple transaction, in which a redundant and old ship was traded for the best price she would fetch. Bancroft was an Englishman who had commanded the brig *Loriot* and had hunted sea-otter for the Americans for several years. As a private individual Bancroft could follow the American practice and flout the Californian licensing laws. He was to hunt on his own account. But in just the same way as McLoughlin thought it sensible to equip Wyeth, or Ermatinger or McKay, to trade outside the Company's preserves, so he thought it reasonable to order Pelly to supply Bancroft with an outfit at a hundred per cent. advance on prime cost, to be paid in sea-otter skins. Further, McLoughlin reserved the right for the Company, or for any of its employees whom he might name, to take a half-share in Bancroft's venture, and though he later declined to take up this option he explained (both to Bancroft and to the Company's officers on the coast) that this did not imply any lack of support—'as it is our wish to do business with him, you will assist him as much as you can, so long as it does not interfere with our business'. His desire to help

Bancroft went so far as to supply the outfit on credit, to be paid for by the skins of the first cruise; but Pelly also, apparently on his own responsibility yet presumably confident that McLoughlin would approve, allowed half of the purchase price of 5,500 dollars for the ship itself to be taken on credit until the end of the first cruise.

In just the same way as McLoughlin had not thought it necessary to explain the details, or to defend the principles, of his bargain with Wyeth until he ruefully discovered that Simpson and the Northern Council could not approve of it, so he merely mentioned the sale of the *Lama* incidentally to the Governor and Committee, as an explanation of his statement that he had no ship available to enter directly upon the hunting of the sea-otter. Strangely enough, the Governor and Committee approved of the sale itself, and even of the arrangement to outfit Bancroft for his voyage. They would have disapproved very strongly of the Company's taking a half-share in the voyage 'as it would have been in direct opposition to our views, wishes and repeated instructions, which have been so explicit, in reference to entering into any divided or co-partnery transactions, that we should have thought they would have prevented the most distant idea of such an arrangement'. McLoughlin had just escaped the full weight of this condemnation though it was plain that the Committee were astonished that he could even have contemplated such an arrangement. For the rest, the Committee turned on Pelly (for McLoughlin was coming to London and could be reasoned with there) and held him personally responsible for the part-purchase-money of the ship which he had allowed to Bancroft as credit.

This may have been unfair to Pelly although he did not suffer thereby, for Bancroft punctually met his bills, and his account with the Company was fully paid by the time he was murdered by Indians on the coast in his second year of command. McLoughlin had disclaimed responsibility for the part of the sale which allowed it to be on credit, but James Douglas wrote that the deal went through in conformity with arrangements made at Fort Vancouver. The key letter between Pelly and McLoughlin on this topic has not survived, so certainty is impossible. Though he escaped direct reproof, McLoughlin's capacity to evade and to misunderstand his instructions was emphasised by the incident, and when he handed over command of Fort Vancouver to James Douglas (to whom the Committee turned with obvious relief) other aspects of his command also began to arouse comment.

Douglas was loyal to McLoughlin throughout his career, and

indeed in his later phases he himself reproduced much of the obstinate sanity of his former chief. But in 1838 he was suave and reasonable, willing to accept the Company's policy without demur, and infinitely more capable than McLoughlin of developing a reasoned argument. Douglas hoped that in general he was in such accord with the views of the Committee that he would run into no trouble. But with the example of McLoughlin before him he made the point in his first dispatch that the 'untried contingencies' of the Columbia Department might demand instant and vigorous remedies. He was clearly aware of the significance, and of the probable outcome, of the developments which he had seen in the Columbia under McLoughlin, and shortly after he had taken up his responsibilities he wrote of 'the yearly increasing difficulties which every one acquainted with our affairs must anticipate from the collision of the foreign and independent interests, growing up on every side, around us'. He foresaw results which no ability, however great, could hope to avert, and he declared his belief that 'The interests of the Colony, and Fur Trade will never harmonize, the former can flourish, only through the protection of equal laws, the influence of free trade, the accession of respectable inhabitants; in short by establishing a new order of things, while the Fur Trade, must suffer by each innovation'.

Here Douglas was being prophetic; as things stood in 1838, the settlement on the Willamette consisted only of twenty-three retired Canadian servants of the Company, eighteen American stragglers from California or elsewhere, ten Americans attached to the Methodist mission, and six ladies with them. They were utterly dependent on the Company, which bought their surplus corn and provided their needs. They were, moreover, favourably inclined towards the Company, the Canadians out of loyalty and the Americans because they respected authority. But to Douglas the settlement seemed to grow yearly in importance and to be destined to wield too great an influence on the affairs of the Company. He suspected that 'the Methodists nourish secret views, at variance with our interests', and he feared the increasing weight of American opinion as he reported that 'the restless Americans are brooding over a thousand projects, for improving the navigation, building steam Boats, erecting machinery and other schemes that would excite a smile, if entertained by a less enterprising people, with the same slender means'. They had petitioned the legislature of the United States to receive them as subjects and to grant them a constitution, and Douglas was afraid that this might one day be taken up if it hap-

pened to coincide with a surge of American public feeling. He was afraid, too, that the missionaries would soon begin to trade, for Jason Lee had just gone to America to arrange for a shipment of goods. Douglas therefore realised that, directly or indirectly, the mission would be bound to enter into trade, and that it would cause more trouble than an active commercial competitor, for the Company could not possibly emerge with either honour or advantage, its motives would be misrepresented, the cry of 'persecution' would be raised, and the Americans might well appeal to their government for intervention. It would be hopeless to try and undersell the mission since it would have no overhead costs for keeping up establishments, and Douglas strongly urged that, if possible, an arrangement might be made by which the Company should supply the mission's needs at moderate prices and so keep it from trading.

This, of course, was the policy which the Company was pursuing towards the independent traders at Red River, and which McLoughlin had followed. The difference between McLoughlin and Douglas lay in the latter's fears of the Methodists. He felt easy about the Calvinists, who had voluntarily agreed not to trade in furs, but he disliked even their proposals to send missions to New Caledonia and Thompson River, and he refused to sell them cattle until he knew the views of the Governor and Committee. In contrast to the Calvinists, Douglas was far more suspicious of the Methodists, whereas McLoughlin had opened his fort to them, had taken courage from the knowledge that their first ship in 1834 had refused to trade with Indians, and had thought that the missions were in a way inevitable and should be welcomed and encouraged.

The difference of attitude was only in part personal. To some extent it was due simply to the developments which had taken place under McLoughlin, developments not only in the Columbia Department but in the general policy of the Company and in the highest political circles in Washington and in London. Most of this change bore relation to increasing emphasis on the potential value of the Pacific coast as 'affording lands easily tilled, excellent pasture, fuel and building materials of the best quality'. In addition, there undoubtedly lingered on something of an American desire to control the waters of Puget Sound as a naval base; and a great deal of explosive American national pride. British statesmen in 1827 had been divided and uncertain, for whereas Canning (strongly briefed by Simpson's answers to the questions put by H. U. Addington) had wanted 'boundless establishments on the N.W. Coast of America' to be retained as a means of access to the trade of the

Pacific Ocean and of China, Huskisson had given the impression that though national pride prevented any abrupt relinquishment of her pretensions; '... Great Britain does not seem indisposed to let the country gradually and silently slide into the hands of the United States'.

From the renewal of Joint Occupation in 1827 these aspects receded into the background; the predominant fact was the fur trade, and the Hudson's Bay Company's efforts to exploit the further period of Joint Occupation to the full, by agreement with the Russians, by Snake Country expeditions south of the river, and by uncompromising rivalry on the coast. But provisions, with timber and salmon as natural products to make up a cargo for the shipping, were weighty elements within this régime, and attention came to focus ever more clearly on the agricultural wealth of the district.

This accorded well with the general outlook of English politicians in the 1830's. An exclusive fur trade had little appeal, but an agricultural settlement could always find support in the Colonial Office, and when in 1837 the Company began to seek a renewal of its Licence for Exclusive Trade (due to expire in 1842) it did so not only with the old arguments put forward in 1821, that competition in the fur trade meant ruin and debauchery for the Indians, but also on the ground that the Company intended to develop an agricultural colony round Fort Vancouver. Eventually, in 1838, Glenelg with Stephen at his elbow agreed to a renewal of the Licence for Exclusive Trade with the Indians west of Rupert's Land provided this should not prevent the creation of new colonies or provinces. If such colonies or provinces were created then the grant to the Company was to be abrogated. So the British government found itself in some sort aligned behind the Hudson's Bay Company—but in a very indirect way, for settlement and the creation of a colony were the vague objectives of government whereas the Company had actually been given a renewed grant of the fur trade, which might well conflict with settlement.

The Company was not entirely disingenuous in this affair. McLoughlin's proposal to establish a company to deal in hides and tallow had indeed been squashed in 1834, but the Governor and Committee had taken his point that the Hudson's Bay Company was bound by the Deed Poll to use its resources only in the fur trade. Yet in 1837 the Governor and Committee followed up Simpson's suggestion that up to a thousand head of cattle should be bought in California, and they suggested that sheep should be added, that a pasture farm should be tacked on to Fort Vancouver, and that the

land at the head of Cowlitz River, at Nisqually and on Whidbey Island, should be surveyed with a view to agricultural use. But, having seen his own proposal for an independent company turned down, McLoughlin could raise little enthusiasm for these projects. He was on the whole so out of heart for agricultural experiments that he concluded that it paid better to use shipping to take lumber to Oahu than to take wheat to Sitka.

There was, of course, something of personal disappointment in this severe re-assessment of the agricultural promise of the district; but McLoughlin had suffered from fever and lack of labour, and he had met with drought in 1835 and with floods in 1837. All the same, he prided himself on the results which he had achieved, and he pointed out to the Committee that the favourable balance of Fort Vancouver was due to the way in which, despite all difficulties and the lack of good land, the farm had supplied provisions for the depot, the coastal shipping, and the coastal posts. He had built up his herd from three bulls, twenty-three cows, five heifers and nine steers in 1825, to almost seven hundred head at Fort Vancouver and a hundred and seventy in the interior, and he hoped soon to be able to provision the ships with beef too.

But McLoughlin had not examined Whidbey Island as he had been instructed, and when he was reminded of the need to do so, in December 1835, the issue had got muddled up with that of removing the main depot from Fort Vancouver to some place easy of access, to which shipping could approach without crossing the dangerous Columbia bar, with a better climate, where cattle could be reared without hand feeding, and where farm produce could be raised. McLoughlin, still with no real knowledge of Whidbey Island, protested strongly that Fort Vancouver must be maintained and that Fort Langley and Fort Nisqually also should not be abandoned. He was thinking only of trading facilities; agricultural possibilities were minor considerations—'as to Agriculture it is enough if they can raise potatoes for themselves'. This siting of a depot continued to divert attention from a wholeheartedly agricultural outlook for some years, but it did not prevent McLoughlin from trying to develop a farm at Nisqually Bay in Puget Sound. Though he reckoned that the soil there was too poor to grow barley or Indian corn without manure, cattle were sent, the trader there was given advice to harrow and to cross-plough his land, and in the end he was told to fatten up as many pigs as possible. By the end of 1837 the 'farming operations' were coming along well at Nisqually; but McLoughlin had persisted in farming there despite his conviction that the soil was unfit for

tillage, largely because he wanted to retain that post in preference to Whidbey Island. Even so, he did not want the depot to be moved to Puget Sound and he reported in 1837 that Finlayson had examined every place in Puget Sound in search of a site for a depot but had found none. He complacently reported after a survey by the steamer that nowhere was there any stream of running water, though he thought wells might be dug, everywhere the soil was poor, and on Whidbey Island there was nothing but sand with a little vegetable mould on top.

It was not until McLoughlin had come into conflict with Simpson over another problem that he found it necessary to depart from this policy, of trying to develop something of a farm at each post on the coast but of decrying the serious attractions of any place other than Fort Vancouver. It was a sensible enough policy, for the farm at Fort Vancouver was limited in its output of flour chiefly by the inefficient mill and by the calculation of costs, freight and sale-price, while each post made its limited contribution of provisions. Fort Langley, for example, was not moved to a new site in 1837 because it 'would not answer for a farm', and although the existing farm was five miles from the post it served its purpose and took over pigs which had been reared at Nisqually, to fatten them up for ships' provisions: 'it would be better for us that you expended wheat in fattening pigs, than that we were short of Pork for the Coast'. The merits of the system were clear; the trouble was that all the arguments were directed to the maintenance of the posts which McLoughlin advocated and to the continuance of Fort Vancouver as the depot. But at the end of 1836 even McLoughlin had lit upon a suitable alternative. He gave instructions that in 1837 the steamer should examine the south end of Vancouver Island 'for the purpose of selecting a convenient situation for an Establishment on a large scale, possessing all the requisites for farming, rearing of Cattle, together with a good harbour and abundance of timber'. The *Beaver's* report came in to Douglas, and convinced him that Victoria combined a secure and easy harbour, good pasture and even possible tillage land, in a way not to be found elsewhere on 'this sterile and Rock bound Coast'. Victoria Harbour was the answer to the Committee's demands, and the tone of McLoughlin's instruction for the survey to be made leaves little doubt that he had information which made him confident of the result.

He had already changed his theme, and was emphasising the agricultural value of the country, because he had fallen foul of Simpson, and of the Governor and Committee, over his policy of

allowing, and to some extent encouraging, retired servants to settle in the Willamette valley—Thomas McKay among them. The attractions of the Willamette were outstanding, good soil, a fine stream, wood in abundance, roots, game and fish to hand. From time to time freemen had squatted there, and in the early days of his command McLoughlin had hoped that the southern expeditions might draw such freemen away from these farming ambitions. But in 1829 he had accepted the time-expired servant Etienne Lucier as a settler and had helped him with supplies and equipment, and others followed in a steady trickle. In allowing them, as in allowing Lucier, McLoughlin was influenced by the knowledge that they would turn to the Americans if he refused them. He had, he said, discouraged them as far as he could. But he knew 'and Every One knows who is acquainted with the Fur trade that as the country becomes settled the Fur trade Must Diminish'. McLoughlin accepted that the fur trade must recede before settlement. He accepted also that such a country could not remain for long without settlers. For him the only question was whether the settlement should be made by loyal and friendly retired servants or 'by a people who will most probably feel very differently Inclined towards the Company'. While he told the Committee that 'Governor Simpson Writes me not to Allow any of our people to settle and of course I will obey the order', he made it quite clear that he thought the policy was mistaken, and that the mistake arose from a failure to appreciate that the soil was so good as to offset the distance involved in comparison with Canada or the United States. At heart Simpson also accepted this, but he was far more determined to delay the consummation of the process than McLoughlin, even at the risk of hostility from the settlers. Yet as American interest quickened, and serious American settlement began in 1834, Simpson began to move.

Jason and Daniel Lee, the Methodist mission leaders, had been settled by McLoughlin in the Willamette country, south of the Columbia and in the territory covered by the Joint Occupation agreement. He could not have prevented them from going there if he had wished; but criticism was directed against his excessive hospitality rather than against the site of the settlement. He was indeed able to point out that the aged and infirm Presbyterian Parker was the only missionary to whom he had given more than temporary hospitality, and that he had supplied the Methodists' needs at fair prices. With all his kindness, too, he had told Jason Lee that when he traded furs even under threat from an Indian he must necessarily be treated by the Company as a casual trader in

opposition, he had reproved him strongly for trading a gun in any circumstances, and he solemnly warned the missionaries that if they introduced settlers who in their turn introduced spirits they would have much to answer for. Still, he supplied them with cattle, he helped them with shipping, and he supplied them with currency when they had to go to Oahu.

Without McLoughlin's support the missions would almost certainly have foundered; but he rescued them and, in effect, established them. This was where he differed from Simpson, for the Governor would only have accepted missionaries in the Columbia, especially American missionaries, if he had been convinced that they would in any case soon succeed and that he had better make a virtue of necessity. He was cynically matter-of-fact about the whole problem. In public on occasion he welcomed all creeds as a means of bringing the Indians to settled habits and an agricultural way of life, the only means of saving the Indians from eventual starvation. He could write to George Pelly at the Sandwich Islands bidding him to co-operate with the missionaries over shipping since a mission on the western side of the mountains was a means to bring the Indians into habits of industry as agriculturalists, a preparatory step towards civilisation and moral and religious instruction. Yet in private he thought that a civilised Indian was useless, and at this time he was resisting a movement to establish a Roman Catholic mission in the Columbia. There was no ecclesiastical rancour in this. Simpson's reaction was purely secular, and was consistent throughout his career. On the whole he thought, as did many of the Company's officers regardless of their sect, that Roman Catholic missionaries were preferable to Wesleyans or Episcopalians, and when a Roman Catholic priest was at hand in his travels Simpson heard mass and vespers on Sundays, 'just as a good Catholic would have done'. Simpson's purpose in rejecting the request of the Bishop of Juliolopolis for facilities to establish a mission in the Willamette valley was simple; there were only about three hundred settlers, who were already served by two American missions and the Company's chaplain. A further mission would merely complicate the picture. The logical conclusion was 'to have Roman Catholic missions at one place, Wesleyan at another, and so on', for the Governor and Council were 'anxious as far as possible to avoid a collision of Creeds'. This desire to prevent missionary rivalry from distracting the Indian—a possibility of which the Indian was acute enough to take advantage—was bound to be unacceptable to the missionaries, especially to the Roman Catholics, who eventually decided that restrictions for

these reasons were insults to their calling and declared that they would not accept direction but would establish their missions where they chose.

This basic conflict of ecclesiastical claims and Company policy lay in the future. For the moment, in 1836, the proposals of the Bishop of Juliopolis brought out the difference between McLoughlin (who could see no reason why the Roman Catholic missions should be discouraged and who recommended a strong bid to secure their support) and Simpson who declined to provide them with a passage. It is true that in the next year, 1837, the Governor and Committee had come round to McLoughlin's views and had decided that they would give transport for the priests to the Cowlitz as soon as that area began to be developed as a colony, but they still refused a passage if the priests would not go where they were directed, and they were afraid that if the missions spread their labours outside the precincts of settlement they would become the focus for the growth of large and sedentary bands of Indians which would have both social and economic repercussions. The Oblate Fathers Blanchet and Demers took advantage of the offer of transport to the Cowlitz, one of them was soon allowed to minister in the Willamette also, and a site for the Roman Catholic mission there was formally ceded in 1838. Simpson was soon urging that they should increase their numbers, for they had quickly shown that 'the ornaments of the altar and the imposing ceremonies of the Catholic worship were indeed more suitable for captivating the attention of the natives than the cold and meaningless ceremony of the minister Waller', whose mission they derided as 'Satan's Kingdom'.

This, however, was in the future in 1836-7, quite distinct from McLoughlin's welcome, which sprang from a readiness to concede that settlement was just round the corner. He welcomed the missionaries of all persuasions not only out of innate hospitality but also out of a sense of their imminent importance. He showed no anxiety to keep them to the coast or to the settlements, and he allowed the Reverend S. Parker to get supplies free from Walla Walla in 1836 while he chose sites to be occupied by his fellow-Calvinists later in the year—Dr. Whitman about twenty-five miles south of Walla Walla, and Spalding a hundred miles further south. The difference between McLoughlin and his masters was really a difference as to how far they should go out to welcome the innovations; therefore, the passage of time normally tended to bring the Governor and Committee to a position which McLoughlin had formerly maintained. But while the Governor and Committee were by 1837

reconciled to providing supplies to the missions (as they were also reconciled to a Roman Catholic mission in the Columbia) provided the prices were fair, they emphasised that they were influenced solely by a desire to prevent the missions bringing in their own supplies by sea. The rites of hospitality were to be observed, but there must be no encouragement for the missionaries to visit the posts.

For the Governor and Committee, therefore, even this apparently open policy towards the missions was still emphatically a part of a rearguard action, to delay the opening of the coast as long as possible. They covered their instruction by saying that things would be different if they could be convinced that the sole object of the missions was the moral welfare of the Indians, but they had reason to believe that an American colony was a fundamental part of the plan. As on so many points, McLoughlin differed from the Committee only in that he accepted this contention, whereas they hoped to evade or delay its fulfilment. Though supplying the missions with all he could spare he was warning them not to trade with Indians, nor even to get cattle in from the United States. But he was sure (and he told them) that 'your coming to the Country may induce settlers to come'; he noted the way in which the Nez Perce Indians were beginning to settle to agriculture round the Whitman mission, and he urged again the dangers of allowing settlers to trade spirits to Indians. When the missionaries' ship *Diana* came up to Fort George in May 1837 he watched her closely and was relieved to see that her crew made no attempt to engage in trade. But yet he suspected American designs just as much as the Governor and Committee, for he had had his suspicions aroused by a visit from William A. Slacum and had summed him up as 'an agent of the American Government come to see what we are doing'.

Slacum was in fact (as McLoughlin discovered) a former purser in the American navy who had been instructed by John Forsyth, Secretary of State to President Andrew Jackson, to 'obtain some specific and authentic information in regard to the inhabitants of the country in the neighbourhood of Oregon, or Columbia river; and, generally, endeavour to obtain all such information, political, physical, statistical and geographical as may prove useful or interesting to this government'. He arrived in Columbia River on the brig *Loriot* from the Sandwich Islands—Captain Bancroft's last voyage in command before he bought the *Lama*—in December 1836 and came up to Fort Vancouver early in January 1837. He said he expected to meet friends who would come overland from St. Louis, but as they did not turn up he proposed to return to the States by

way of Mexico, and he took with him a party of nine cattle-drovers who had come up from California in 1834, and two Canadian settlers who wanted to buy cattle and drive them up to the Columbia.

McLoughlin's suspicions were so strong that at one stage he offered Slacum a free passage to California, but Slacum stayed a little longer and then went out in his own ship. On his return to the States he published a long report which went far to stimulate a new phase in the Columbia. Slacum started from the assumption that the Columbia valley was already in the United States, and assured the settlers that they were resident in the United States, while he asserted, for the same reason, that the Hudson's Bay Company was illegally importing vast quantities of merchandise. With such an approach, he naturally found little to say in favour of the Company, which he described as an immense foreign monopoly. He was, of course, right in saying that individual American traders could not compete with so wealthy a concern, for that was the essence of the Company's power in Oregon; but he was wrong to accuse it of trading arms and ammunition, of perpetuating slavery, and of keeping its own retired servants in thralldom. The finer points of the Company's policy, placed against the realities of the trade on the coast—such as their veto on sales of arms or liquor unless competition made it necessary, or their regretful conclusion that slavery could only be ended by a forcible emancipation—could not be expected to appeal to Slacum, for he wrote with a purpose. For him the Willamette valley was the finest grazing country in the world and he hoped that the United States would make good its claim up to 54° north, that it would never surrender Puget Sound, nor permit free navigation of the Columbia.

The Company's reaction was to create the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company. This was little more than the formal adoption of McLoughlin's 1832 proposal for an independent hide and tallow company. Even during the intermediate years, when McLoughlin had been blowing cold upon the agricultural value of the Columbia, he had reported that at Nisqually and the head of Puget Sound there was pasturage for an immense number of cattle. In 1837 the Governor and Committee followed up their first enthusiastic order to purchase a herd of five thousand in California (which McLoughlin had ignored) by a more reasonable order to buy from five hundred to a thousand. This move was closely connected with the Company's approach to government for a renewal of its Licence for Exclusive Trade, and was explicitly declared to Lord Glenelg. A farm was to be started in the Cowlitz valley, since this was north of the river and

might well become British territory (which was unlikely for the Willamette) and retired servants were urged to transfer there from the Willamette. This proved difficult, for the men had begun to improve their lands at the Willamette, and cattle required more capital than most of them could command. James Douglas, however, in 1838 pushed on with the beginnings of a Company's farm at Cowlitz, and though his attempt to ship cattle and sheep up from California met with obstruction and high prices, he discovered that any number of cattle could be bought there, at a price, and he began to transfer cattle and men to the Cowlitz.

Until the Licence for Exclusive Trade had been renewed the Company had actually accomplished very little towards fostering the hide and tallow project, and that little had been done, in the way of shipping in sheep and starting the Cowlitz farm, within the framework of the Company itself. As the renewal of the licence took shape in 1838 with its emphasis on the possible formation of a colony, McLoughlin was in London, convinced that the Company itself could never make anything of cattle raising. So, with government support 'for political reasons', and having taken legal advice, the Governor and Committee decided that agricultural settlement could best be established 'under the protection and auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company by a separate Association' rather than in conjunction with the fur trade. To implement this idea, the first meeting of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was held in February 1839, with Pelly, Colvile, and Simpson as agents for the Hudson's Bay Company. A prospectus was accepted and it was agreed that the new company should have an authorised capital of £200,000 and that each stockholder in the Hudson's Bay Company might buy one share of £100 in the new company for each share of £300 which he held in the parent company. Ownership of the new stock was confined to members and officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and they were allowed to pre-empt stock on payment of only one-tenth of its value (the remainder to be paid by later calls). Members of the Committee took substantial allocations, and the Company's officers in the fur trade took shares (perhaps with little option in the matter), but the bulk of the Hudson's Bay shareholders hung back.

Control of the Puget's Sound Company lay unmistakably in the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, and despite their earlier protestations that they claimed his complete services they appointed McLoughlin in his capacity as Chief Factor of the Columbia Department to manage the affairs of Puget's

Sound and allowed him an extra £500 a year for this duty. Further, they allotted the Cowlitz farm to the Puget's Sound Company, and when it became clear that the Cowlitz had inadequate grazing grounds, and those already partly occupied by the Roman Catholic mission and by settlers who had been persuaded to come north of the Columbia from the Willamette by Douglas, the Company supplied the deficiency. The best supplement of grazing ground north of the Columbia was to be found at Nisqually, and in 1839 the Company made the Puget's Sound Company a gift of joint ownership of this post, which soon became the chief station, mainly devoted to grazing and stock farming while the Cowlitz farm produced wheat, barley, oats, peas and potatoes.

There was some hope that this agricultural move would tie in with the recently-negotiated contract to supply the Russian posts, but on the whole that arrangement was mainly concerned with cereals and the new urge was towards sheep and cattle, and the Governor and Committee were chiefly anxious to move towards a lasting and satisfying boundary agreement with the United States. Their policy was to encourage settlement on the north side of the Columbia and to secure all the more desirable situations there, so as to forestall the American missionaries. If British subjects insisted on settling south of the river (in the Willamette) they were to be given such help as would enable the British community there to remain stable and dependable as long as the existing boundary situation lasted. But the main object was to stabilise and strengthen British claims north of the river, and so to increase the chance of the river being declared the boundary.

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CHAPTER XXV

McLOUGHLIN AND THE SETTLERS: THE OREGON BOUNDARY

In 1838 and 1839, as the Russian agreement gave promise of a more effective answer to opposition on the coast and as McLoughlin went back to take over his command again from Douglas (with a substantial increase in salary in view of the growing importance of the Columbia District, the agreement with the Russians and the responsibilities of Puget's Sound) it seemed that the Oregon boundary might lead Great Britain and the United States to war. In March 1838 the Company wrote to Palmerston as Foreign Secretary to inform him of an American bill to take over Oregon by military force, to claim all the Pacific coast west of the Rockies and north of 43° , and to build a fort at the mouth of the Willamette a few miles below Fort Vancouver. The resolution had been introduced by Senator Lewis F. Linn, Senator for Missouri, and represented extreme mid-west opinion. But though any such action would be in contravention of the agreement for Joint Occupation which, by the Convention of 1827, could only be broken subject to a year's notice by either side, the bill received enough support to make it possible that so extreme a measure might be adopted.

There could be little doubt, in any case, that opinion in the States was being focused on the Oregon boundary. In December 1837 William Slacum had presented to the Senate his Memorial, and not only had he formulated American claims to the country but he had also put before the American politicians and electorate the damaging propaganda-statement that the Company's trappers incited Indians to attack American trappers, emigrants or settlers. This wild charge completely bewildered McLoughlin, and no substantiation of it has ever been attempted save by a comparison of the way in which the Hudson's Bay men could travel among the Indians with immunity whereas Americans seemed always liable to attack. The contrast was real and important; but the Company's men explained it simply by their knowledge and restraint as against American arrogance, ignorance and carelessness.

Still, the charge had been made; it was a further incentive to enterprising Americans to vindicate their claims to Oregon. Slacum

was not alone in the field. Jason Lee had gone back east to arrange for a cargo of supplies, and he gave Simpson the impression that the Methodist mission would not only ship supplies but a very considerable increase in settlers in the coming year. At the same time the 'Oregon Provisional Emigration Society' was organised with headquarters at Lynn, Massachusetts, under the Reverend F. P. Tracy. Their object was to organise and supply several thousand emigrants, and they wrote to Simpson at Montreal in March 1839, to know if the Company would support them in return for a promise not to engage in the fur trade. Their suggestion, that their body might arrange a sovereign state in Oregon, independent alike of the United States and of Great Britain, introduced a new element into the situation. This was a possibility about which the Company itself was in some doubt, but when Simpson had sent the proposal to Governor Pelly, and Pelly had sent it first to Lord Normanby and thence to Palmerston, the Foreign Office decided that such new and independent states were not desirable. Probably opposition rose from fear that independence would not last long if the majority of the settlers were to be organised from the United States by the Oregon Emigration Society; for at this time, in December 1839, Senator Linn followed up his resolution of February 1838 by a second proposal based on the indisputable right of the United States to the territory of Oregon. He asked that Great Britain should be given due notice that the agreement for joint occupation would be terminated, that a military force should be enrolled and sent to Oregon to dominate both the Indians and any foreign forces which might be in the territory, and that American settlement should be encouraged by the grant of holdings of 640 acres each to immigrants.

This resolution also the Company passed on to Palmerston at the Foreign Office early in 1840, for the Company's purpose of discouraging American settlement and shipping, and of staking a claim to the good lands north of Columbia River, ought to appeal to a Foreign Secretary who believed in positive policies and who set himself up as champion of the rights of Englishmen. The Governor's report of Linn's motion, too, coupled the interests of the Hudson's Bay and the Puget's Sound Companies with the retention for Great Britain of the only position on the shores of the Pacific which would be valuable for colonisation or for commerce, and with the possession of the only safe and commodious harbours on the coast, which would give command of the North Pacific and even to some extent of the China Seas.

Senator Linn's resolutions were a sign of the political temperature

at Washington, not an effective diplomatic move. But they stirred the Company, and the Company in its turn stirred the government. Yet even under Palmerston's leadership the British government did not always react favourably, and when John Russell as Colonial Secretary received a report from Commander Belcher of the Royal Navy he took the Company soundly to task. Belcher had been sent to the Pacific coast in H.M.S. *Sulphur*, and although he was hospitably used by McLoughlin he proved highly critical, and accused the Company of encouraging the American missionaries on the Willamette. The Governor and Committee denied that they had encouraged Americans. They agreed that it would be a highly dangerous thing to have done, though under the Treaty of Joint Occupation they had no power to forbid the American missions; on the contrary they had sent out two Roman Catholics and three Wesleyans and (an unfortunate episode) the Reverend Herbert Beaver. The Company was convinced that in the matter of the Oregon boundary it had done all that was possible to maintain British interests. It was more actively British than the Colonial Office; and in 1840 it was engaged upon a serious campaign in which, even at the cost of encouraging an agricultural immigration which must ultimately conflict with the fur trade, it hoped to authenticate British claims and to achieve the boundary of the Columbia.

But the Company by itself could not hope to stand against the government of the United States, and in its efforts to establish a British claim it knew that it must rouse the British government to action. It is clear that the Company's policy was that, if the Columbia was to be colonised, it should if possible be colonised by British people; or that if American colonisation should prove inevitable then it should be kept south of the river and should be hedged in to the north by a British colony. There was nothing altruistic about this; the Company could reckon on getting fairer treatment from a British than from an American government, and a colony which would respect the Company would be a barrier behind which the fur trade of the north-west coast could be exploited. But if the commercial significance of the policy was clear, so was its national appeal, and the Company's actions were such as to place it in advance of the Colonial Office in formulating British claims.

When Simpson heard of Senator Linn's resolutions he feared a powerful American movement, and he immediately instructed Douglas that he was to take possession of some of the most eligible spots near the mouth of the Willamette. These spots would be south of the river, in territory which would almost certainly go to the

United States, for even the Company was not making any serious claim to a frontier south of the river. Possession would, however, give a good bargaining point and it would give a claim to compensation. So at the little post of Fort George, which had been built near to the old Astoria when the Americans had failed to follow up the Company's withdrawal to Fort Vancouver, the Company's men were to ignore any order to withdraw; at Tongue Point and on Multnomah Island buildings were to be erected and a start was to be made with farming. The general intention was to stake a claim to land, to uphold the claim until the Americans were provoked to some act of ejection, and then to hope that Palmerston would take up the claims of British citizens ill-treated by a foreign government.

The Columbia Department as a whole had, in the meantime, shown great vitality and prosperity, and in his last despatch before handing back the command to McLoughlin, in October 1839, James Douglas was able to report that everything was very satisfactory. The sea-otter trade was to be followed up by taking out a licence in the private name of the Company's agent in California; the contract with the Russian Company was being followed up; a plan to make a further attempt at a post in Stikine River was in preparation (it was subsequently abandoned and Douglas took over the Russian establishment) and a mutiny on the *Beaver* had been effectively suppressed. The 'Southern Party' under that veteran trapper Michel Laframboise, who had over ten years' experience of California, Umpqua River, Bodega Bay and the Bonaventura country, had returned safely and with a good hunt. Laframboise had, however, got involved in the Mexican governor's troubles with Indians and with petty traders, and in order to get out with his furs he had engaged to help the government against Indian risings. Douglas was equally averse from taking any part in the Indian wars and from abandoning the profitable trade of California, and he had sent back Laframboise with firm instructions and a strong party. At the same time Ermatinger had come in from the Snake Country with news that their own difficulties and Blackfeet depredations made it very likely that the Americans might withdraw—in which case Douglas suggested that the Company should transport the independent trappers to Rio Colorado and the Gulf of California, abandoning the Snake Country since its furs were exhausted and sustenance there was so scarce. In its internal organisation, its frontier activities to the south and inland, and in its coastal trade the Hudson's Bay Company was in a strong position.

Only at Fort Simpson had American opposition persisted with the

arrival of the *Thomas Perkins* carrying guns which were the exact counterfeit of the Company's (even to the maker's name). The *Beaver* and the *Nereide* put up so hot an opposition that the American could not have traded at a profit; but since the *Thomas Perkins* then left for an otter hunt which might give considerable profits, and since she was part of an enterprise involving another ship, with a visit to Kamchatka and a freighting contract for the Russian American Company, the outcome could not be clearly foreseen.

As against this steady development and prosperity, with the salmon fishery flourishing and even some wheat grown on manured ground at Nisqually, the Willamette settlers had increased by fifteen trappers who had given up the fur trade, and though Douglas expected a huge increase in the ensuing years, the only result to date was that an overland party from New York had dispersed *en route* so that only three destitute individuals had reached the Company's posts, and two 'exploratory agents' from New York and Missouri had decided that the Willamette did not meet their views.

Although the agricultural operations had suffered from drought, even in agriculture much had been accomplished. The farms at Cowlitz, Nisqually and Fort Vancouver, had been considerably increased, the crops were safely got in and winter wheat was sown, a fine flock of stock sheep had been imported from England, and more sheep were being brought from California, while the saw mill was turning out marketable lumber, a water-driven flour mill, finished in 1839, was capable of grinding eighty to a hundred bushels a day, and Fort Vancouver boasted a granary capable of holding eighteen thousand bushels. The picture was blacker in 1840, for Fort Langley was burned down by careless accident in April, and then came news that the redoubtable Samuel Black had been murdered by an Indian—a murder caused by frustration and superstition, no way connected with the Company's policy. These were depressing incidents; more important was the way in which American numbers had increased in the Willamette while the English settlers, even on the Cowlitz farm, were at a standstill. A Methodist party had arrived in the *Lausanne*, which had also brought fifty-one independent settlers. Seven or eight families of so-called 'Self-supporters' had also arrived, meaning to depend on their own efforts for their livelihood, and were settled uneasily near the Whitman mission at Walla Walla. As against this, McLoughlin could find no room for immigrants at the Cowlitz since the Puget's Sound Company required all that was available, and the British

settlers on the Willamette insisted on staying there, south of the river, even when the Roman Catholic mission brought its influence to bear on the Canadians among them. It was little help that, with so unhelpful an approach to the Company's plans to foster actual settlement, McLoughlin should have accepted the Company's view of Jason Lee and the Methodist missionaries as influenced 'by other objects of a political nature, besides the moral and religious instruction of the natives, and that they are employed as pioneers for the overflowing population of the New England States, who have it in view to repay us for our good offices, by possessing themselves of the fruit of our labours, as soon as they may be in a position to wrest them from us by main strength'.

The Hudson's Bay Committee had a clear and well-defined policy for combating both Methodist and other American encroachment; and since in formulating the policy they had been much influenced by McLoughlin's advice it is extraordinary that the plan should have been so little in harmony with the realities of the situation or with McLoughlin's own views on some important matters. The two greatest weaknesses were the determination to encourage settlement north of the Columbia when all the natural attractions led to settlement south of it, and the determination to encourage settlement in a form which would leave the settlers under the strong direction of the Company, whereas the vital element must necessarily be an individual pioneering spirit which would accord badly with such a policy. Yet McLoughlin was told in 1841 that it was the Company's intention to limit the operations of the Puget's Sound Company, and of all the settlers under the Company's auspices, to the north side of the Columbia, and that in selling cattle, as in other ways, he was to offer every inducement to settle north of the river. 'This, besides promoting British policy, will, we believe, be found most advantageous to the people themselves.' Had the advantage to themselves been clear, the settlers would have made no difficulty about accepting the policy. But all indications were in the opposite direction and in favour of the Willamette, and the tendency to control the site of settlement was interwoven with a plan to control the manner of settlement.

In their first approach to the Puget's Sound Company the Hudson's Bay Committee had set out their proposals for settlers, in March 1839. They expected that by 1841 the Puget's Sound Company would have about ten thousand sheep and about two thousand cattle. They would then send out a few respectable farming families, each with two married servants chosen by the farmers themselves, the

servants' passage-money to be charged against the farm and the servants to be under five years' engagements to the Puget's Sound Company. Each farmer was to be given a thousand acres on leasehold (the number of years not specified), of which a hundred acres were to be ready broken up and fenced for him; he was to be supplied by the Company with twenty cows, one bull, five hundred sheep, eight oxen, six horses and a few pigs, and he was to be provisioned by the Company until he had got his first year's harvest in. In return, the land and buildings were to revert to the Company at the end of the lease, and the Company was to have the right and duty of marketing the farm produce, and half the increase from the stock was to belong to the Company. This system of farming 'on halves' was 'to be altered as may be found necessary or expedient'. But the essence of the system was firm—that the Hudson's Bay Company should transfer the stock, and the land and buildings, to the Puget's Sound Company which would farm its own lands with hired servants and would also supply and set up the immigrant farmers. The farmers, however, were not to become free agents, to manage their flocks and herds at pleasure.

These were years in which general attention was closely directed to schemes for organised emigration to North America. Durham's Report, with particular reference to the rebellions of 1837 and to the economic and social problems of Upper and Lower Canada, was published as a Blue Book in January 1839. Much of the Report was attributed to Charles Buller, and the long additional report on Public Lands and Emigration (Appendix B) was openly and officially by Buller. Here was insistence on the folly of previous expedients and on the need for close survey, careful grants, and revenue for improvements to be derived from taxes on wild lands, sales of public lands and sales of timber, which were typical of the Wakefield school. There was also insistence upon large and constant immigration if development was to be achieved. For Buller, as for most of the large body of men interested in the problem, it could only be 'systematic emigration' which would achieve the objects in view.

The natural tendency in an age of *laissez-faire* economics had been to leave migration to private enterprise, and as far as North America was concerned the volume of emigration seemed so satisfactory that the tendency was confirmed. A government Commission on Emigration in 1831 had reported that the annual average for the five years previously had been twenty thousand, most of whom had financed their own move, and had found a living on arrival. Much could be done to ensure that the immigrants were correctly

informed of circumstances and were warned of some of the dangers, and these duties the Commission handed over to the Colonial Department in 1832. But this information stimulated a greater flow of emigrants, and the scandal of cholera-ridden and ill-found emigrant ships led to more effective government intervention, quarantine laws, Passenger Acts to ensure shipping inspection, and the appointment of an Agent-General for Emigration and of subordinate officials in British and colonial ports. Much of the desire for 'systematic emigration' therefore centred round a desire for protective legislation to ensure satisfactory conditions of enlistment, transportation and reception. But Buller, and a great body of organised opinion, went further and demanded that government should interfere far more actively and formatively. Even for the North American emigrants, with their short and comparatively cheap sea voyage, government transport should be available and free passages should be possible, responsible agents acting under a central authority should forward the immigrants to well-chosen locations, and the immigrants should not be settled immediately upon lands of their own; 'the possession of capital, and an acquaintance with the modes of husbandry practised in the colonies, should precede settlement'.

There was therefore nothing in the Hudson's Bay-Puget's Sound ideas of controlled settlement which should have been contrary to general theory or practice. Yet the emigrants could not be got. The revelations of the chaotic shipping and reception conditions had inevitably created a fear of the voyage which brought a sharp decline in emigration in 1832-3, and for a decade, until the Irish potato famine began to make its influence felt, the flow did not recover. These were years, moreover, in which the New Zealand Association was capturing the imagination of the emigrating public, was taking the attention of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons, was forming its joint-stock association to charter the *Tory* and, flying in the face of a hostile and indifferent government, was forcing its way towards the recognition of British sovereignty by the Maori chiefs, the grant of a royal charter to a New Zealand Company, and the beginnings of organised settlement there. The whole New Zealand affair was conducted in a blaze of publicity, with government commissions, meetings at the Guildhall, and much newspaper comment. Apart from the attractions of Australia, South Africa, and the short Atlantic crossing to eastern Canada or the United States, New Zealand gave the Hudson's Bay project almost insuperable opposition, even when the Company proposed that the emigrants should be taken via Panama instead of round Cape Horn.

In fact, the Company was so afraid that the superior attractions of the Columbia would encourage too many emigrants that it gave the project very little publicity, and although Ellice himself began to search out suitable settlers from Scotland he found the response negligible, and the proposals for controlled and Company-assisted emigration from England never took effect.

The Company was the more ready to accept this reversal because the Red River colony seemed to offer an alternative with many local advantages. In 1840, as the Puget's Sound development began to take shape and American ambitions were realised, Simpson reacted to what he called the 'crafty and designing character of the more enlightened residents' on the Willamette (including the missionaries) by instructing McLoughlin to do all he could to break up that settlement before it became 'the resort of the worthless and disaffected outcasts from the United States and Sandwich Islands'. At the same time he instructed Finlayson at Red River to recruit not more than two hundred people, four to a family, to reinforce the settlement at Cowlitz Portage, where he proposed that they should take farms from the Company on the 'halves' system.

Simpson wrote that the 'halves' system, or something like it, must be adopted since the Company could not sell land outright in view of the unsettled state of the Oregon frontier. But Finlayson found that recruitment at Red River was gravely hampered by the conditions set out in the 'halves' system, and he took upon himself to promise that when the boundary had been established (and the land at Cowlitz had been declared British, as he hoped), the Company would sell the farms outright and would abolish the system of 'halves'. Without such a promise he could not have got a single family of respectability to consider the proposal. With this modification (and an adjustment of Simpson's rather arbitrary figures to the normal family unit of five) Finlayson had got together seventeen families by the beginning of May 1841, and hoped to get his total numbers up to about a hundred by the time the route became practicable.

When Simpson came through Red River on his journey round the world, in June 1841, he found that Finlayson had sent off twenty-three families, a hundred and twenty-one persons in all, under the leadership of James Sinclair. The Governor passed through the cavalcade in the prairies before he came to Edmonton. They were making slow progress, especially by comparison with his fantastic thrust (for at this stage of his journey he was averaging fifty miles a day on horseback) but they were healthy and happy, hunting the buffalo as they went and living in the greatest abundance.

Eventually twenty-one families, a hundred and sixteen persons, arrived at Fort Vancouver in the fall, only two families having put back. This was a preponderant addition to the Oregon population, whose total in 1841 was less than five hundred, a small and struggling group. Sinclair's party of a hundred and sixteen was a significant fraction which almost balanced in itself the hundred and fifty Americans, and which gave to the Canadian settlers a preponderant total of three hundred and fifty. Further development along these lines would have given the Company that firm basis of actual settlement which might have stirred the British government to rebut the rising clamour in the States.

McLoughlin sent the majority of the party to Nisqually, where land and cattle were allotted to them and the 'halves' system was put into operation, under the Puget's Sound Company. The remainder were sent to Cowlitz, where some of them took farms and 'severed their connection with the Company', that is, with the Puget's Sound Company; for they were provided with seed and agricultural implements by the Hudson's Bay Company. The Red River immigrants at the Cowlitz prospered by tillage, and remained as a steady element. They had among them the Roman Catholic priest Demers, who certainly was a force tending towards settlement and stability, for the Company so far mistrusted the Methodists as to depart from its views on a 'Conflict of Creeds' and to provide passage for two Roman Catholic missionaries, Blanchet and Demers, on condition that they would try to persuade the Canadian freemen settled at the Willamette to move north of the river to the Cowlitz. In view of the refusal of the settlers to leave the Willamette, Blanchet was given a site for a church there. But there was no Roman Catholic priest at Nisqually, and the land there was, as McLoughlin admitted 'very indifferent'. The immigrants were, moreover, joined by a handful of recently retired English fur-trade labourers who were unused to agriculture and were ill-pleased with the Company. The result was that first a few and then, when McLoughlin refused to alter their agreements, the majority of the Red River party deserted their farms at Nisqually and went off to the better land at the Willamette, settling on the rich pasture of the Falatine Plains.

McLoughlin himself thought this inevitable—'as I have observed verbally to Sir George Simpson no man who can take a Farm in the Willamette will remain at the Cowlitz or Nisqually'. The consolation was that at Nisqually they would be a source of endless expense and would never be content, whereas at the Willamette they were off the Company's books and would have to look to themselves. It is

probable that many of the Red River party really were, as they were described, insolent and thriftless. As soon as he saw them McLoughlin thought they wanted to go to the Willamette. But their departure marked a failure for the Hudson's Bay Company and for its satellite company. 'The formation of a colony of those people was one of the most important objects for which the Puget's Sound Company was instituted', they wrote, and they instructed Simpson and the Council of the Northern Department that the fur trade should not be burdened by the costs of transporting any more such parties.

While the Puget's Sound Company was thus failing to establish a substantial British colony on the Columbia it was also failing in its farming operations. These were the years of the model farm experiment at Red River, and the Governor and Committee must have wondered, as the Chief Traders and Chief Factors certainly did, whether the fur trade in itself was not enough to handle. With specially chosen merinos and Leicester ewes and rams imported to the Columbia at such cost that it was thought worth-while to send two Scottish shepherds to look after them, and with endless instructions on the care and preparation of the fleeces, the Company for many years found its wool almost unsaleable in England because it was packed and shipped full of dirt, and both sheep and cattle so far failed to increase that there seemed no other explanation save 'gross mismanagement'. The softer way of putting this was to explain to McLoughlin that the disasters seemed to be in part due to the way in which he was tied to the business of his post and department at Fort Vancouver, and to emphasise the need for handing over the farms to good resident farmers. These were conclusions with which Simpson fully agreed, and he hoped that while the Cowlitz Farm under the management of William Fraser Tolmie would be turned over entirely to tillage, Nisqually and the cattle would be handed over more and more completely to settlers, with the Company acting merely as an agent and a middleman for marketing the produce.

Simpson had lost his enthusiasm for agricultural settlement as a means of staking the English claim, behind which the Company would exploit the fur trade of the inhospitable regions to north and west. The 'mania' for fur-traders in the Company's employ to settle as agriculturists seemed to him ominous, and equally forbidding was the way in which American immigration forged ahead of British.

Dr. Elijah P. White, who had brought a small party to the Methodist mission at Willamette in 1837 but had disagreed with his colleagues and gone back east in 1840, reappeared in 1842 with a party of about a hundred Americans. He carried, moreover, a

commission from John C. Spencer, Secretary of War in the United States, which empowered him 'to take charge, generally, of Indian affairs west of the Rocky Mountains, as a sub-agent, no law being in existence which permitted the establishment of a full agency in that country'. Already, in February 1841, Jason Lee had gone far to justify the Company's suspicions by calling a meeting of the settlers at the Willamette and inviting them to organise a government. The Canadians refused to associate themselves with this proposal; they were certainly influenced by the priest, Blanchet, who was in the chair at the meeting, and they also showed a fear that an independent government in Oregon would soon turn towards the United States.

The American settlers decided not to attempt the move by themselves; and in this they were influenced by 'Lieutenant Commodore' Wilkes of the United States Navy, who had been sent out in 1838 for the purpose of discovery in the Antarctic, but who had been diverted to the Columbia. Wilkes made a thorough investigation of the river and of the coast, and inland as far as Okanagan, while he also sent a party south to California. But his relations with McLoughlin were friendly (especially after he had lost one of his ships on the bar of the Columbia and the doctor had shown his usual helpful hospitality) and he assessed the agricultural potential of the land with a realistic eye. So although Simpson ascertained that Wilkes meant to urge the United States to claim the whole of the Oregon territory between 42° and $54^{\circ} 40'$, Wilkes was much more fair than Slacum had been. His view of the missionaries was not far different from that of the Company, 'they seem more occupied with the settlement of the country and in agricultural pursuits than in missionary labours'; and whereas Slacum had proclaimed that Oregon was already American territory Wilkes advised the American settlers not to press their point until the boundary had been arranged. As the Governor and Committee wrote, 'no authority emanating from the Government of the United States is to be recognised west of the Rocky Mountains, until the boundary question shall have been settled'. But Dr. Elijah White, with his commission as Indian agent, in 1842 called a meeting of the Willamette settlers and informed them that the United States intended to take them under its protection. Although the American settlers welcomed the news the Canadians once more held aloof, and the Company even began to think that its retired servants who had so persistently remained in the Willamette might 'ultimately prove beneficial' and counteract the 'hostile proceedings of the Americans'.

McLoughlin had first reported Elijah White's party as about a

hundred; it was later confirmed as a hundred and thirty-seven men, women and children, and they were followed in 1843 by 'almost a thousand'—or, to be exact, eight hundred and seventy-five. Although many of White's party proved unsatisfactory and moved off to California (as Simpson had thought probable), still it was clear the Americans were out-numbering the British; and when the British were out-numbered Simpson foresaw that they could expect to be treated as 'occupants at will' and subjected to 'insult, violence and every species of aggression'. The need for government of some kind was urgent; some form of provisional constitution could not be long delayed, for legal and police problems inevitably arose (and the first move towards setting up a government had already arisen over the need to decide on the disposal of the estate of Joachim Young, the pioneer settler). Meetings of the settlers, to consider their common problems, were quite inevitable, and in the circumstances it was equally inevitable that they should take on an American colour.

As yet, until the 'great immigration' of almost a thousand Americans had arrived in the fall of 1843, the Americans did not actually out-number the British, and McLoughlin was able to write on 2nd May that 'the Canadians who are fully as many as the others, told them they would positively take no part in their plans of organisation, and government'. But the Americans were determined and positive (and indeed hostile) in their outlook. With a few Englishmen, who had come in by way of the United States, and some foreigners, they formed themselves into a body, elected three of themselves as an executive board, three others as magistrates and three as constables. This decision at the meeting held at Champoege on 2nd May (the Company's charter-day) is often held to show that by a narrow majority the community decided to frame some sort of government. This certainly happened, but McLoughlin's account emphasises that the Canadian community held aloof and that the Americans were determined to proceed nevertheless.

For the moment McLoughlin was happy to see that all was quiet, but the purposefulness and hostility of the Americans were more clearly shown when the 'Organic Laws and Articles' for Oregon were adopted. These provisions were based upon the laws of Iowa, but the land laws militated against the Company and McLoughlin when they ordained that no person could hold more than six hundred and forty acres, or claim extensive water privileges or other key situations, but yet they excepted the claims of the missions, made previous to that time, up to an extent of six square miles. This was the sort of outlook which a provisional government might be

expected to adopt, but in itself it was rather an expression of opinion than an effective constitutional act. The Canadians still held aloof, the Americans were not in a clear majority, the provisional government had no powers, and McLoughlin and the Company's officers ignored it.

The great immigration of 1843 changed this, as much by modifying the American view as by reinforcing it; for although the new men gave the Americans a preponderance which they had not hitherto had, McLoughlin also noted that 'they seem much better disposed towards us, than those who came last year'. They made serious efforts to overcome the reluctance of the Canadians to join them, and in March 1844 the latter, led by their priest Father Langlois, formulated their 'Address from the Canadians to the American Citizens of Oregon', in which they stated that until the boundary had been settled they would not subscribe to any petition to be incorporated into the United States, that the country should be open to all settlers until a proper government had decided otherwise, and that in this way they claimed the right to settle as British citizens in the same way as the citizens of the United States or any other country. They protested, too, that they would not have a provisional government 'too individual'.

With these amendments the Canadians could have little objection to the provisional constitution, and when the Organic Laws of the settlement had been altered so as to admit that the British had an equal right with the Americans, pending settlement of the boundary by the two governments, the way was open to arrange a *modus vivendi* with the Company. In August 1845, therefore, McLoughlin 'yielded to the wishes and requests of the respectable part of the people in this Country, of British and American origin, by uniting with them in the formation of a temporary and provisional Government'. McLoughlin thought this the only means of preventing violence and contention and even of protecting the Company's rights and property, and he may well have been justified in so doing. But he was certainly optimistic when he wrote that 'This Organisation has no reference whatever to the claims or rights of the Governments to which the parties interested respectively belong, and is binding on them only so far as such Laws are consistent with their duties as British or American subjects', though some Americans thought the state of Oregon must be independent since distance would always prevent the United States from exercising effective government.

So far there were two important limitations on the provisional government; it made no claim north of the Columbia, and it accepted

the need for an international decision before even the territory south of the river could properly be called American. Both of these limitations soon lost their value although both had apparently been fully safeguarded. But the Oregon Legislature had already sent Elijah White back overland with a petition to Congress asking for military and naval protection and the establishment under American auspices of 'a distinct territorial government', and the anti-British feeling of many of the residents was one of the reasons vouched by McLoughlin and Douglas for throwing in their lot with the moderates in the provisional government. A campaign of assertive nationalism had been steadily fostering an 'Oregon fever' in the United States since the 1830's, and the mis-statements with which the campaign was conducted had their effect both in making Oregon into a dynamic political issue in American politics and also in angering McLoughlin and the Company's officers. At the same time they filled the minds of the new settlers with unfounded but dangerous fears and ambitions. McLoughlin usually emerged even in American accounts with praise for his hospitality, but from 1830 onwards, when Hall Jackson Kelley published his first pamphlet, the Company was under constant attack not only as a foreign monopoly but also as a ruthless opponent which ill-treated and exploited settlers, maltreated Indians, slaughtered them without compunction, and then engaged the survivors to massacre American traders, settlers and missionaries.

This was the sort of accusation which had appeared in Slacum's Report, and it was repeated in the journal kept by Captain Spaulding, who had brought the missionaries' ship the *Lausanne* to the Columbia in 1840. The 'false and outrageous statements' made by Spaulding roused McLoughlin to surprise and indignation and he refuted the calumnies both in his letter to the Governor and Committee and in discussions and correspondence with individual Americans. But the immigrants arrived full of hostile prejudices and it was not until they had found Captain Spaulding's reports to be false that there was any working with them. Spaulding's journal, moreover, was used in debates in Congress; extracts were printed in the House of Representatives' Reports, and acquired currency thereby although his assertions 'have so little real connection with the known events of our history that it is difficult to believe they form part of it'. Spaulding was taken up by Lewis Fields Linn, as invaluable material in his campaign to 're-occupy' Oregon for the United States. The Senator had been ceaselessly at work since 1838, and in 1843 he did in fact achieve the passage of his Oregon Bill

through the Senate, the climax of a movement in which the value of the Company's trade, its conduct and principles, and the agricultural wealth of the territory, were recklessly mis-stated. McLoughlin could only assume that Linn and the other Senators who had debated the problem were themselves completely ignorant and had been misinformed by unscrupulous and designing rogues. But he could not resist denouncing Senator Thomas Benton's repetition of the story that Americans who challenged the fur trade would be shot by British Indians. 'The whole statement is in fact utterly false and as wicked a calumny as ever disgraced the pages of any writer.'

McLoughlin might protest, and with justice; but the damage had been done. The American settlers never quite overcame their fears; they left their homes convinced that in Oregon they would have to fight the Company and would have to build forts to protect themselves from Indians whom the Company had incited against them, and when they left the country, as some of them did, their one regret was that they had not burned down Fort Vancouver. At least McLoughlin so reported actual conversations, and he had personal experience in plenty of the settlers' animosity. Apart from a series of vexatious petty incidents, the hostility focused round claims to the Falls of the Willamette, the site of the future Oregon City. That the site of a water-mill should occupy an important place in the history of a concern so vast as the Company had become, and that at a time when the Company's affairs had developed international significance, and might lead to war between Britain and America, may seem absurd. But the claim to the Falls of the Willamette was a matter in which McLoughlin was personally involved, and his personal commitment helped to aggravate the growing estrangement between himself and the Company, and it raised in an acute form the question whether the Columbia should be accepted as the established boundary which would settle the national disputes. The Falls, about twenty-five miles from Fort Vancouver, had early been marked down as the site of an important salmon fishery and as the point beyond which ocean-going shipping could not proceed. It was McLoughlin's considered opinion (fully vindicated since) that the Falls were 'destined by nature to be the most important place in this country'. During his 1828 visit to the Columbia Simpson had begun to pay attention to the timber trade, and he and McLoughlin had then planned to set up a saw mill at the Falls, 'where whole Forests of Timber can be floated into a very fine Mill Seat, which Dr. McLoughlin and myself have examined, Saws enough could be employed, to load the British Navy'. McLoughlin got some timbers

squared in readiness for the mill, but the project remained still-born despite Simpson's enthusiasm. It proved to be exceedingly easy to over-stock the timber-market in the Sandwich Isles, and Columbia timber met competition there from Norfolk Sound and even from New Zealand; the small mill at Fort Vancouver proved adequate both for export and for immediate use. McLoughlin, however, maintained his interest in the spot, he had potatoes planted there, in 1832 he had a race blasted out for a mill, and in 1838 he hauled his squared timber to the site and built a store-shed.

This was all very dilatory and unenthusiastic, but McLoughlin had much to do, the timber trade was risky, and there was no immediate urgency to stake a formal claim to the land or to reinforce it by residence; equally, under the Treaty of Joint Occupation, there was no reason to imagine that the Company was not in effective occupation of the Falls. So when in 1840 the Methodists proposed to establish a mission at the Falls McLoughlin informed Jason Lee that when the boundary had been settled he intended to claim the side of the Falls on which he had prepared the mill race, including the whole point of land from the upper end of the Falls across to Clackamas River and down to where the two rivers joined, together with a small island in the Falls. He did not oppose the Methodists, he even allowed them to build on this claim, and he lent them some of his timber with which to build.

By 1842, despite this generous treatment, the missionary Alvin F. Waller was claiming a square mile of land at the Falls. He denied that he was opposing McLoughlin's claim but said he was trying to secure a title for himself in the event that McLoughlin's title should fail and the mission itself should not put in a claim—a statement which his superior, Jason Lee, found equivocal. At this stage, McLoughlin was acting as though the claim at the Falls was his own private property, he built a house upon Abernethy Island in the Falls to safeguard his claim against the American Felix Hathaway and the Island Milling Company which had also built there, and he freely negotiated grants of land on his own responsibility. The position was not clear, and if McLoughlin had been challenged by the Company he might have reacted in a variety of different ways according to the tone of the challenge and his relations with the challenger, for he undoubtedly felt a strong personal interest, and equally strongly he felt that he was protecting the Company's interests.

As Simpson passed through in 1841 he noted the advantages of the Falls but paid no particular attention to the problems which

were rising. But when he had got as far as Honolulu he wrote back to warn McLoughlin that he suspected the Americans of planning a great salmon-curing business at the Falls, and warned him that he must take possession, on behalf of the Company, of such of the water privileges and the adjacent land as the Company could claim by right of prior occupation. Moreover Simpson ordered that a large and modern grist mill which was on order from Scotland should be erected at the Falls. The mill had been ordered in 1841 on behalf of the Puget's Sound Company and was designed for erection at the head of Puget Sound. But Simpson had decided both that the mill, which arrived in October 1842, should be transferred to the Falls and that ownership should be transferred to the Hudson's Bay Company. The actual mill was not immediately set up, for McLoughlin thought the country did not yet require so costly a machine, and he pleaded a lack of lime at the Falls as an obstacle to building. But the Company as such had become involved in the claim just as Waller was beginning to get his imagination fired and just as the American settlers in Oregon were beginning to reveal their hostility. McLoughlin took such legal opinion as was available, from an American lawyer, Lansford W. Hastings; he confirmed that Waller was not setting up a counter-claim to his own, he paid Waller for such work as he had done in clearing land at the Falls, and he had his claim surveyed and laid out in city lots.

The American lawyer could give no firm opinion, and McLoughlin wrote to Simpson early in 1843 and asked him whether, in the first place, the Company could hold such a claim in its own name. If not, could he secure it for them in his name? If neither of these courses would suffice, and it should prove impossible for the Company to keep the claim, directly or indirectly, he would keep it in his own name on his own account. 'In the meantime till I hear from you, I will go on as if it was mine.' When Simpson had referred the problem to Adam Thom, and the Recorder of Rupert's Land had given his opinion, McLoughlin remained as mystified as ever, for Thom quite rightly said that the validity or insufficiency of the Company's claim, or of McLoughlin's, would depend on the law code of the new territory, a code which, whatever its national derivation, was as yet not in existence. McLoughlin got as little help from Simpson and from the Governor and Committee, who merely sent him a copy of Thom's non-committal opinion. He proceeded on the lines which he had indicated to Simpson, and acted as though the claim were his own.

The general atmosphere in Oregon in 1843 was such that a claim

by the Company would probably not be respected for a moment, and the first draft of the Land Laws adopted by the provisional government was obviously aimed at the Company and at McLoughlin; but though Douglas thought that the sensible course would be to abandon the claim, McLoughlin got more and more obstinate. During 1843 he erected a saw mill at the Falls and began to erect the big flour mill there, pushing the claim as his own although the mills were the property of the Company. His assumption that as an individual he could hold a claim was, however, shaken during that summer when John Record (or Ricord), a travelling American lawyer on his way to the Sandwich Islands, casually mentioned his view that as a British subject McLoughlin could not hold the claim. For a time it appeared that Record might bring about an agreement, and after a bad start McLoughlin was prepared to be very reasonable and accommodating. But the lawyer instead accepted Waller as his client and 'penned a caveat' against McLoughlin on the grounds that he was an alien, that he was the chief officer of a foreign corporate monopoly, that he held the land only as the agent of that monopoly contrary to the law of the United States, and that he had never resided on the claim and only began to assert his rights two years after Waller had entered into actual possession. Waller, in contrast, claimed as a citizen of the United States, by right of prior occupancy, and by actual residence.

This, of course, was all based on the assumption that the Falls lay within the United States, and that was not yet the case at the end of 1843. They certainly lay within the territory ruled by the provisional government, but that was emphatically different from falling within the United States, for the amendments to the Organic Laws had formally recognised the rights of British citizens. Although even Senator Linn's Oregon Bill, at last accepted by the Senate in February 1843, would not have prevented a foreigner from holding land in Oregon as long as he held it subject to the law, Waller appealed to the Senator and found his cause taken up, while Record published a detailed account of Waller's case in a proclamation to the people of Oregon. Here Waller definitely stated that 'The Hudson's Bay Company a Foreign Corporation, is in fact the claimant while Dr. McLoughlin only lends his name'. McLoughlin replied in a 'Statement' which was much too long, detailed and rambling, to have any political value as against the curt dogmatism of Record's proclamation. But the 'Statement' contained copies of correspondence and memoranda of discussions. It was well-substantiated, and left no doubt that Waller had entered upon land which McLoughlin

(or the Company) had obviously pre-empted unless there was some legal obstacle to their so doing. Where McLoughlin was not convincing was when he merely stated with no attempt at proof that 'I am not claiming the Land for the Hudson's Bay Company but for myself'.

On the basis of McLoughlin's personal interest, now so clearly stated, discussions could go forward. To secure a quick agreement, his friends arranged for him to give five hundred dollars and five acres to Waller, and fourteen building lots in what was now commonly called Oregon City to the Methodist mission. But on the heels of this came the break-up of the Methodist mission. Jason Lee had been recalled in the fall of 1843, to answer charges about misuse of the mission's property from which he was later cleared. His successor in Oregon, the Reverend George Gary, decided in the summer of 1844 to break up the mission and to sell off all the property. The provisional government was in the meantime getting to work, and in June 1844 the Legislative Committee passed its Bill on Land Claims which allowed free males over the age of eighteen to make one claim for 640 acres on the basis of permanent improvement with intent to occupy, provided a man might hold town lots in addition to a claim. When McLoughlin took the chance offered by the break-up of the mission to buy out the Methodist claims and so secure the undisputed right to 'some of the choicest spots now occupied by American settlers', at the end of July 1844, therefore, he must have known that the Bill on Land Claims meant that he could only be acting in this matter on his own account, not that of the Company, and in his negotiations he stated that he wanted the land for his own business purposes.

The price demanded was six thousand dollars, later reduced to five thousand four hundred, which he thought exorbitant in view of the way in which he had originally given the land; and though he was given ten years in which to pay, he was deeply embittered at the Methodist mission. In making his settlement he was drifting very near to that policy of buying out an opposition which had so often brought him into trouble during his career. Simpson was coming to the conclusion that the claims at the Falls of the Willamette would never be recognised by any American authorities as the property of the Company. There was a possibility that the British government might write such a recognition into a boundary treaty with the United States, but in 1844 there was little prospect of this, and Simpson warned McLoughlin that he should not spend money in efforts to secure the Company's title or in further improvements at

the Falls. McLoughlin had bought out the Methodists before he received Simpson's instructions; but Simpson also was not idle, and while McLoughlin was buying out the mission Simpson was charging the expenses already incurred, for the mill, for paying Waller for his improvements, and for securing legal opinions, to a 'John McLoughlin Suspense account'.

By the summer of 1844, therefore, the mills at the Falls were standing to McLoughlin's personal account 'in the Company's books and in the Registry books of the self-constituted authorities of Oregon'. The claim to the land stood in his own name. Simpson had disavowed all further expenditure, and James Douglas, standing at McLoughlin's elbow, could see no prospects unless McLoughlin took it 'on his own account'. McLoughlin too had come to the conclusion that he could only keep the mills if he could say that he had in reality bought and paid for them, and in March 1845 he sent two personal drafts to Simpson, totalling £4,173 11s. 6d., to pay off the sums which the Company had so far expended. In his covering letter he explained that the Company had given him no clear answer to his questions and so he had thought it left to his discretion to keep the claim for himself or the Company, as he thought most advisable 'and as I conceive it impossible to preserve it for the Company, I considered myself justified in assuming it in my own personal account'. Simpson found the letter 'not quite distinct', but he acted as his own thoughts dictated, as the letter seemed to indicate (and as discussion with McLoughlin's messenger Dugald Mactavish seemed to confirm) was McLoughlin's view, and accepted what appeared to be McLoughlin's offer to purchase the mills.

But McLoughlin's letter was indeed equivocal; besides the offer to buy the mills it included statements that he only meant to hold in trust for the Company and then to hand over to another nominee when he retired, that he was ready to hand over to anyone the Company named, and that it must be obvious he did not intend to start a new career as a miller at his time of life. The Governor and Committee thought McLoughlin had no more right to the Falls than any other member of the fur trade, and McLoughlin himself was aghast, and protested vigorously at the way in which his views had been misunderstood. But with all his protests he treated the mills as his own property, offered to hire them out to the Company, and asserted his right to sell them. Then he explained that his plan had been to settle his family at the Falls and to carry on milling both flour and lumber there on behalf of the Company.

There can be little serious doubt that at the time McLoughlin

sent off his drafts to Simpson he seriously meant to take over the Falls; indeed Ogden, who was by no means unsympathetic, accepted that as the true state of affairs, and though he was moved (but not quite convinced) by the doctor's later protestations he ultimately concluded that there would have been far louder protestations if the offer had not been accepted! But McLoughlin would never have sent the drafts if he had known what Simpson knew, and he maintained that Simpson with his knowledge should never have put through the sale. For Simpson knew that McLoughlin was to be deprived of the extra salary of £500 a year from the Puget's Sound Company, was to be superseded in command of the Columbia Department, and was to be ordered back east of the mountains. This was not a dismissal from the Company or even a demand for resignation. Such transfers were part of a normal routine. But McLoughlin's tenure of the Columbia was long-established, there was no comparable department to which he could go, and the Columbia Department was peculiarly his own creation. The order, too, left him with the choice of resigning so as to vindicate his claim to the Falls by residence, or of forfeiting it by remaining in the fur trade.

The news came slowly to McLoughlin. In November 1844 the Governor and Committee had decided that the Columbia Department would be divided up into two or more districts and that McLoughlin's extra £500 a year for the great extent and consequent responsibility of his charge would cease, and left the Governor and Council of the Northern Department to make suitable arrangements. In June 1845 the Governor and Council set up a board of three members—Douglas, Ogden and McLoughlin himself—to carry on the Department for the year 1845-6. McLoughlin was expected to take his year's furlough in 1846-7; and he took this year's leave although in March 1846 he had told Simpson that he would not return to duty when the leave was over. He had in fact already moved from Fort Vancouver to Oregon City in January 1846, but he was granted a further two years' leave, and his retirement was only made effective as from June 1849. Even then he got his full share of the profits of the trade as a Chief Factor for another year, and a retired payment of a half-share for a further five years.

This, as has been pointed out, was generous treatment; and the Falls turned out a very reasonable speculation too. For the year up to May 1846 the Company and McLoughlin shared the trade there, and McLoughlin received £1,053. For this year also he still got the extra £500 in addition to his salary since the notice depriving him

had arrived late. After that McLoughlin ran the mills on his own account; the flour mill paid well, and after a time he managed to let the saw mill to an American for a thousand dollars a year, in addition to which he was getting about £300 a year in rents. This together was a very fair competence and McLoughlin might well have expected to end his days in comfort when he had become a United States citizen in 1849. The persecution which he then suffered, as the animus against the Company led to his deprivation of the claim at the Falls under the Oregon Land Donation Law of 1850 (an injustice which was not rectified till after his death) was not of the Company's making.

But McLoughlin parted from the Company a sour and embittered old man, convinced that he had been deeply injured, and that Simpson was at the bottom of it all. He traced the trouble to 1841—'Sir George Simpson's Visit here in 1841 has cost me Dear'—and although there had been serious differences between the two men before that date, he was probably right, not so much because Simpson became more officious as because McLoughlin then began to challenge Simpson's authority. He wrote to the Governor shortly after that visit to tell him their private correspondence must cease, and he maintained that this was the proper course rather 'than act the part of a Hypocrite and pretend a Regard for a man which I could not feel because he wanted me to stultify myself'.

The defiant split had behind it many differences of opinion on the conduct of the trade, and a clear clash of personalities. But it was brought to a head by the poignant issue of the murder of McLoughlin's son John. This revealed the hostility of the two old men and also brought attention to bear on those questions of jurisdiction and police action which were bound to arise as the fur trade faced the problems of settlement.

Young John McLoughlin must have been a sore worry to his father. His mother Marguerite Wadin McKay McLoughlin had given the boy some Indian blood, and when McLoughlin left him near Montreal with Dr. Simon Fraser for his education, rather than take him to the Columbia, the early correspondence between father and guardian emphasised the difficulties. McLoughlin was uneasy about the boy, Simon Fraser thought the fur trade would best suit his talents, and Simpson declared that 'the Company have determined to take none of these Young Men into their service'. Simpson used his influence to get the boy into a Montreal counting-house, but he lasted only about a year there before his father sent him, then aged seventeen in 1829, to study medicine in Paris under his uncle, the

successful physician David McLoughlin. Here he gave great satisfaction, took his degree of *Bachelier ès Lettres* and applied his undoubted talents to his work until 1834 when, for some offence which was not even explained to the young man's father, his uncle sent him back to Canada. He might have completed his studies at Montreal, but he proved extravagant and unreliable with money, and Simon Fraser would have sent him to his father at Fort Vancouver but he was refused a passage in the Company's brigades.

His angry and humiliated father offered the young man a further year's study to complete his degree at McGill, but young John wasted his time, ran into debt and was actually in prison in 1836 when his father's agent settled with his creditors. A further attempt to join the fur trade was turned down by Simpson, and the father fully agreed with the verdict—'Is he such a fool as to suppose that people will Engage a person in this Service who had shown so Untractable a Disposition?' The father still hoped to bring the prodigal back to his medical career, but the young man joined the self-styled General James Dickson's filibustering expedition of 1836, with the object of recruiting an army of half-breeds at Red River and setting up a kingdom in California. It was a crazy and dangerous scheme, but it brought young McLoughlin into the fur trade; for Simpson got to hear of it as the 'expedition' was on its way to Red River, and to break up the party and detach the leaders he offered to take young McLoughlin into the service as a clerk and surgeon on a three years' contract. Young McLeod, who was also involved, was offered an apprenticeship. The Dickson expedition reached Red River so late in the year, in December, and in such poor condition and small numbers, that even young John McLoughlin had no further hope of it; he accepted Simpson's offer, and though the Northern Council in 1837 appointed him to Fort McLoughlin his father kept him at Fort Vancouver. Except for the winter of 1838, when he accompanied his father to Norway House, John served at Fort Vancouver until 1840. Then he was transferred to Stikine as assistant to William Glen Rae.

The Russian post at Point Highfield, Stikine River, had been set up chiefly to oppose Ogden's expedition, and under the arrangement which Simpson and Wrangell had concluded in 1839 they were agreeable to hand it over to the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company's 'magnificent project' to build in opposition to the north at Taku therefore lost its edge, and in 1840 McLoughlin sent James Douglas north to take over 'Fort Stikine' and to build Fort Durham at Taku. Stikine was put under William Glen Rae, with

John McLoughlin as his assistant. The staff was twenty men, and subsequent events made it clear that they were not easy to handle. Rae had married a daughter of McLoughlin and was a Chief Trader, well reputed in the service. But he was a weak character, and after he had taken his own life, in 1845, it appeared that it was common knowledge that he drank to excess and was most unstable. He must have been a poor mentor for his brother-in-law. But John McLoughlin seems to have won his spurs in the fur trade; he had mastered the business in the counting-house at Fort Vancouver and he had a reputation as a good disciplinarian. His father, it is true, was determined he should shift for himself when his contract was expired, but that does not necessarily mean that he thought him incompetent, and the business of Stikine proceeded satisfactorily. Even when McLoughlin drew out Rae, to establish a business in California, early in 1841, young McLoughlin seems to have remained stable and responsible, and he had at hand a sensible assistant in Roderick Finlayson.

But in the course of his tour, in September 1841, Simpson had visited the Alaskan posts. He had been vividly impressed by the dangers from unruly and blood-thirsty Indians, and he had given permission to some fifteen men at Fort Stikine to take native wives. But he seemed well enough content with the management, and had no hesitation in drafting Finlayson away to take the place of a sick clerk at Fort Simpson. This was the great mistake. After the departure of Finlayson young McLoughlin seems to have deteriorated badly, to have taken to drinking raw spirits and to have become morose and tyrannical—at least evidence to that effect was given.

It was April 1842 before Simpson was again at Stikine, having in the meantime cruised down the coast to Fort Vancouver, further to California, over to Honolulu and then back to the coast with the intention of entering Russian territory at Okhotsk. With the Russian Governor Etholine Simpson witnessed a drunken murder, and concluded with him an agreement abandoning the use of spirits in the coastal trade. As he sailed into the unsavoury little harbour at Stikine he had proof of the wisdom of this, for the flags were at half-mast. The day previously John McLoughlin had been murdered. When Simpson arrived the men were still in a state of great insubordination, the Indians were gathered ready to attack the post, and the senior hand had already sent off a hysterical letter to John Work at Fort Simpson. In the few days at his disposal Simpson took depositions from four of the men, from which it appeared that McLoughlin's general conduct was highly reprehensible, and that

on the day in question he had been drunk by mid-day and had gone on steadily drinking rum until one o'clock in the morning, when he went to quell a disturbance in one of the men's houses. Failing to find the men he sought, he came back for his rifle (which he was too drunk to re-load himself) and searched the bastions and the gallery. Some shots had already been fired, and when he went down into the courtyard another four shots rang out and McLoughlin fell dead.

Simpson, from the depositions of the men 'ascertained beyond a doubt that a Canadian of the name of Urbain Heroux had discharged the fatal shot'. But apart from the trouble of enforcing the Canada Jurisdiction Act, which involved taking the accused and witnesses to the courts of Canada, the crime had been committed on Russian territory which had only been leased to the Company. Simpson therefore decided to take Heroux with him to Sitka and there hand him over to the Russian authorities. Since several shots had been fired there was bound to be some doubt as to who had fired the fatal one, but Simpson was obviously more concerned to set the post in order by a display of authority than to attempt to elucidate the mystery and punish the actual murderer. The evidence was that both murdered and murderers were drunk, and it would be almost impossible to pin the blame; and young McLoughlin hardly seemed worth the trouble. Simpson's mistake was to allow this last consideration to appear in his handling of the affair. In his letter to the father he reported that young McLoughlin's whole conduct and management had been exceedingly bad, the business of the post had been neglected, and his violence when drunk was so notorious that Simpson firmly believed the murder was done as a measure of self-preservation, and that any court would bring in a verdict of justifiable homicide.

This may indeed have been true, and the terror of men who were being stalked round a small arctic post by an angry and very drunken man armed with a rifle must have been real enough. But the evidence was that of self-confessed rogues who were all implicated; and McLoughlin was not the man to accept such a verdict-without-trial. Nor was he the man to let such a matter drop, as Simpson seems to have suggested in a private letter, especially when he had read the details of Simpson's hurried enquiry and had decided that 'you conducted it as if it had been an investigation into the moral conduct of the Deceased, and as if you were desirous to justify the conduct of the murderers'. From the start he ascribed the tragedy to Simpson's 'most injudicious arrangements' in transferring Finlayson away from

Stikine and so leaving his son alone, with no other reliable man at hand, to control a post full of turbulent men.

Simpson's action soon began to appear highly dubious, for he had dismissed from Stikine a villainous Iroquois called Pierre Kanaquassé on the ground that he had made a previous attempt to murder John McLoughlin, and McLoughlin took the chance of getting a full and (perhaps) authentic narrative from him. From this it appeared that the murdered man had not relapsed into bad habits but had found such trouble in keeping his rascally men within bounds that they had made an open conspiracy to murder him, and that not one but three attempts had been made on his life. This threw into doubt the whole of the evidence upon which Simpson had acted, and it began to seem probable that young McLoughlin had in fact kept the post well and had incurred venomous hostility in so doing, and that he had himself been well aware of the threat which hung over him. With rising conviction the old man was able to throw grave suspicion on the charges of habitual drunkenness, or indeed of any drunkenness, and to show that the reason why Simpson had taken the disastrous step of removing Finlayson was because young McLoughlin had got everything into such good order that Finlayson was not needed; and he was able to show that Chief Factor John Rowand, whom Simpson had left at Stikine for a fortnight in 1841, was a strong witness for the temperance and reliability of his son.

Whatever evidence McLoughlin brought, Simpson held to his first position; and since McLoughlin's letters got more incoherent and repetitive with anger and indignation the Governor was able to assume an attitude of tolerant rectitude and to maintain that McLoughlin's feelings had run away with his judgment. Though the Governor and Committee seem slowly to have come to McLoughlin's view they could not easily dissent from Simpson. In private they expressed their doubts, but they could not allow McLoughlin to triumph, and they could not support his proposal to charge the whole of the garrison of Stikine with a mass conspiracy to murder. McLoughlin had in the meantime ordered all the men suspected of conspiracy to be taken to Sitka, and when this proved impossible, Kanaquassé and one other prime suspect alone being taken, he had dispersed the others under guard to the posts on the coast. Simpson protested in vain, and when in 1844 the Russians made it clear that they would take no action, and released the suspects, McLoughlin decided to send Heroux and Kanaquassé, and eleven witnesses and an interpreter, to Norway House. This raised legal problems of the

right of jurisdiction, and more immediate problems as to whether McLoughlin or the fur trade should pay the heavy costs, and the Governor and Committee warned him that they would hold him responsible and that they disavowed the action.

By the beginning of 1846 McLoughlin was, therefore, more firmly convinced than ever that he was right and Simpson wrong. But a public prosecution by the Canadian or by the British government was not legally possible, the Company was emphatic that it would not institute a private prosecution, and he sadly realised that 'as it would cost to send the case to England where alone it can be tried at least ten thousand pounds', he had to finish with it. His persistence had already cost him the sympathy of most of his friends, for he would allow no-one to keep an open mind, and they joined with the Governor and Committee in their wish that he would compose his differences with Simpson and give his attention to the fur trade; their interests were bound to suffer when two such leaders differed so bitterly.

The two differed on almost every point, of policy as of personality. The old quarrels over the steamship, over the number of posts, the buying out of Americans and the outfitting of private trapping parties, had never been healed, and on top of them had come a further difference. McLoughlin was enthusiastic to open a regular trade to California, and with Simpson's consent had in 1841 sent his son-in-law William Glen Rae to take charge of the trade at San Francisco. By 1843 Simpson had decided that the California business was badly planned and ill-considered and should be immediately wound up, and this difference also wove in and out of the correspondence of the two men. Moreover the steamer *Beaver's* boilers were showing signs of wear by 1841 and McLoughlin (rather contumaciously) proposed to turn her into a sailing vessel, using her engines to drive a saw mill. But in his visit to the northern posts in 1841 Simpson had decided that the Russian agreement had so far eliminated competition that all the posts except Fort Simpson could be closed, and that post and the *Beaver* could carry on the trade of the coast. He had expected McLoughlin to grumble but to accept the decision; but, perhaps because Simpson had discussed the plan with his subordinates, perhaps because he really sensed a fundamental error in approach, McLoughlin took the whole proposal as an attack on his management and neither accepted nor forgave it. He never met Simpson after 1842, when he went to see him in Honolulu, and he had ceased his private correspondence with the Governor some months before the murder of his son.

To all of these problems there was the inescapable background of the American immigrants and the American frontier. It has been maintained, probably with justification, that the Oregon frontier was settled by the climate of American politics, not by the number of immigrants. But the sheer numbers of the immigrants greatly affected, and divided, the Hudson's Bay officers who were nearest at hand. Following the great immigration of 1843 came a further 1,400 in 1844 and then almost 3,000 in 1845. American traders had followed (including Congressman Caleb Cushing whose Report on the Oregon Territory of 1839 had indeed advised against a territorial government but had included many documents, such as Jason Lee's memorial, Wyeth's report, Hall Jackson Kelley's memoir and Slacum's report, which were outspokenly against the Company and in favour of an American establishment). Simpson, like Douglas and most of the officers, saw the country south of the Columbia 'infested with all kinds of strangers' who were troublesome in a variety of ways, and was aghast at the prospect. The boundary problem would be settled by sheer occupation if a diplomatic settlement did not safeguard British interests before immigration took control.

But McLoughlin disregarded his continuous instructions, and argued that the settlers would afford a market and would provide a surplus of corn which the Company could trade. He thought the only course was to win their tolerance, and continued to supply them. By 1844 he had lent goods and seed to the amount of over six thousand pounds upon very little security. He had behind him the strong argument that had he not made advances the starving immigrants would probably have taken them, and might have burned Fort Vancouver; and he had asked for government protection. Little could be got from government, and although a small sloop, the *Modeste*, did indeed pay a visit to the Columbia in 1844, her officers did little to enhance British prestige and nothing to arouse a feeling of loyalty.

In going so far as to suggest the need for protection, McLoughlin was running counter to his usual policy of accepting the immigrants. But he was writing then, in 1843, of the danger of the Americans coming north of the river, and this was to him a new and alarming sign. As early as 1824 the Governor and Committee, and the officers on the spot, had accepted the conclusion that when a boundary came to be settled it was almost impossible that the British should be conceded anything south of the river. This had been the reason for transferring the depot from Fort George to Fort Vancouver, for the

attempts to move the inland post from Walla Walla to the north bank of the river, the re-siting of Spokane (for which Simpson had hurriedly picked a spot on the south side of Kettle Falls) and for the emphasis placed on Fort Colville as the interior depot for the Columbia Department. There had been little difference of opinion about this policy; all were agreed that 'we ought to get all we can from the south side of the Columbia while it is in our power', and the Snake Country and California expeditions were deployed with that purpose. Even McLoughlin, feeling as he did that 'If discovery gives a right of sovereignty the British Government would be Entitled to the Country north of Lewis's River to where it falls in the Columbia', always realised that it was almost unthinkable that any negotiated boundary would accord to the British any rights south of the river.

The attempts to find an alternative depot to Fort Vancouver showed that the Governor and Committee were not even confident that the north bank of the Columbia would remain British. But McLoughlin was not convinced by the favourable report on Victoria Harbour which he had received in 1837, and the site did not appeal to him when he visited the spot. He was not convinced of the failings of Fort Vancouver, and the Committee thought he had not understood their purpose. During McLoughlin's absence in England in 1838 James Douglas reported that on the south end of the island were three good harbours of which one in particular (that now called Victoria) was as good as anything the coast was likely to reveal. McLoughlin, however, on his return, again inspected the chosen spot and reported that 'It is a very fine harbour accessible at all seasons, but is not a place suitable to our purpose'.

McLoughlin's indifference and opposition sufficed to suppress the project until Simpson had visited the Columbia again in 1841-2 and had convinced himself that the boundary would never allow the British even the north bank of the river. He knew that Lieutenant Wilkes was surveying with the purpose of supporting a claim by the United States to all the territory between 42° and $54^{\circ} 40'$, and he thought it probable that the line might come 'through the Straits of de Fuca, till it strikes the Mainland South of Whidbey's Island'. He was convinced that the American government would want a port on the north-west coast, and at this time he thought that Britain would accept a line through the Strait of de Fuca for the sake of peace, and in so doing would give up Puget Sound and Hood Canal. This was not original *a priori* thinking on Simpson's part: the informant who had told him of Wilkes' purpose had also told him that this was a

likely outcome, and though Simpson as an interested party hoped that the British government would never accept such shameful terms, Simpson as a sensible man warned the Governor and Committee to be prepared for 'the worst'.

As a means to anticipate such a decision Douglas was sent once more to examine the south end of Vancouver Island in 1842, and at last his report satisfied even McLoughlin that here was a place which was well adapted for the depot. Douglas's report, it is true, was far more discriminating than the enthusiastic accounts so far received. He saw few traces 'of the level champaign country so fancifully described by other travellers who preceded me in this field', but at Camosack (Victoria Harbour) he found a range of plains almost six miles square, with land for both tillage and pasture, with a secure harbour, plenty of timber, and with water-power adjacent. Even at Camosack he thought that fresh water might be scarce and that wells would have to be dug.

Before Douglas's report had been received (or even written) Simpson had issued a preparatory order. Writing from Honolulu in March 1842 he had ordered that Fort McLoughlin and Taku should be abandoned, that the men should be transferred to the new post under command of James Douglas, and that in 1843 Stikine also should be abandoned. The Governor and Committee, having digested Simpson's suggestions and the resolutions of the Northern Council which were based on them, concurred except that they decided to keep Stikine going, and so McLoughlin found by the end of 1842 that the erection of a new depot on Vancouver Island was being forced upon him by firm orders to 'take the necessary steps', and that the new depot was linked with the abandonment of the coastal forts by which he set so much store, and was based on an assumption that effective American demands would include the north bank of the Columbia.

These were issues on which the Company did not stand alone, merely to make its profits (or losses) and to deal as merchants with the economic issues. The ultimate decisions had to be made by governments. The object of the Company was to develop the situation so as to align national interests behind the Company's ambitions, and to precipitate the settlement at a time when strong government support might reasonably be expected. Palmerston was the man for the Company's money, and when news of Senator Linn's proposals to give to Oregon territorial status within the United States reached London in February 1840 Governor Pelly lost no time in writing to Palmerston, to urge the preservation of

British property and interests, of claims to land suitable for colonisation, and of the need to keep a base for a North Pacific squadron. This, of course, placed the Company in the vanguard, more interested and more active in maintaining British interests than government was.

This is true, and important; but there was nothing peculiar in it. The fate of Canada was still in the balance after the rebellions of 1837, the Durham Report, and the union of the two provinces by the Canada Act, and the correspondence of Governors-General was at this time full of the possibility (accepted as not unreasonable) that Canada might well throw in her lot with the United States. When Poulett Thomson (later Lord Sydenham) went to Canada as Governor-General to achieve the union of the two provinces Russell instructed him that he must emphasise 'Her Majesty's fixed determination to maintain the connexion now subsisting between them and the United Kingdom'. But Poulett Thomson himself, when he came to review the situation of Upper Canada, wrote 'I know that, much as I dislike Yankee institutions and rule, I would not have fought against them'. The future was far from clear, and the confidence which would lead to firm action against the United States was nowhere to be seen. The Legislative Council of Upper Canada thought that the adoption of Durham's plan 'must lead to the overthrow of the great colonial empire of England', and there was a strong school which advocated 'the doctrine, that colonies are useless and burdensome'. The whole issue of the North American colonies was being worked out against a background of conflicting principles. On the one hand there was a widespread and genuine conviction of the merits of responsible government, and indeed of its inevitability. On the other hand there was an equally strong conviction that the concession of responsible government would merely amount to a withdrawal of British influence and a denial of British responsibility. Then 'no loyalty now existing . . . will prevent their seeking another influence in the neighbouring republic, to replace the one needlessly withdrawn', and it was feared that before many years the 'umpirage' of events in Canada would devolve upon the United States. Most Englishmen held with Durham that 'England, if she lose her North American colonies, must sink into a second-rate power', but the 1837 revolts had brought from Brougham a speech in favour of a 'kindly and gentle separation' of Canada from Great Britain, and even Melbourne in the debate on the Act of Union in 1840 would go no further than a refusal to discuss the possibilities. 'Whether it were deemed by the inscrutable will of

Divine Providence that those great territories in North America should be severed from us, it is not for me to discuss.' Yet Melbourne had instructed Durham that although separation might perhaps not be of material detriment 'it is clear that it would be a serious blow to the honour of Great Britain'.

With such doubts in the minds of statesmen where even Canada was concerned, there could be little hope of a clear and effective national policy for the Columbia. The possibility of a war with the United States over the Oregon boundary was a factor which in the early stages of a discussion would make the British government hesitant and averse from bold claims; in the later stages, as the climax approached, it might well evoke strong support as national honour appeared to become involved—or it might further emphasise British diffidence as the government seemed likely to be called upon for military action. The Company therefore paid the closest attention to the diplomats and politicians, and assiduously cultivated any goodwill which seemed available. So in September 1841 Colvile wrote to Simpson to explain the fall of the Melbourne ministry and the formation of Peel's ministry, with the probability that Aberdeen would be Foreign Secretary and Stanley Colonial Secretary. Simpson had been asked via Pelly, by Russell and Palmerston, to communicate his views and information, and in passing on his news of Wilkes' objective and of the possibility of a boundary running through the Strait of de Fuca he strongly urged that the government be pressed not to accept any boundary north of the Columbia; otherwise Great Britain would be robbed of the only part of the territory which was of any value.

Coming on the heels of Pelly's letter to Palmerston, arising from Senator Linn's resolutions, Simpson's letter might have had significant results. But Palmerston had gone from the Foreign Office, and Aberdeen had taken his place, far more concerned over the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick than over the Oregon boundary. There seemed a chance that Aberdeen's gentle handling of the Oregon dispute might have been successful, for it met a like moderation in Daniel Webster. But the Company could not count on this, and the new post at Victoria was started in 1843 as the great immigration of that year led all but McLoughlin (who lent them supplies) to fear that such inroads would settle the question out of hand, and as the provisional government began to take its unmistakably American shape. Whatever happened in Oregon, decisions would be made by governments, not by settlers and traders nor even by the governors of great companies. So the convention of delegates

from the states in the Mississippi valley which met at Cincinnati in July 1843, and which affirmed the right of the United States to all Oregon from 42° to $54^{\circ} 40'$ and urged more intensive migration and military protection, seemed to the Company ominous.

As it became clear that a strong body of American opinion would press for a frontier north of the Columbia, the Company began to think in terms of securing compensation for its rights when and if such a settlement should be conceded. Simpson was still preoccupied in the first instance with possessions south of the river. There was almost no likelihood that such land could remain British, and by 1844 Simpson was advising that since the claims at the Falls of the Willamette would never be conceded the Company should press for the boundary treaty to be so framed as to give to the first occupants of land a right which they could later sell. McLoughlin was pursuing the same problem in his own way, by putting the claim at the Falls in his own name, and Douglas was working on the wider issue of the lands north of the river, and was advocating an arrangement for securing by treaty the lands actually occupied so that they could later be turned to profit, in the event of the Columbia being given up.

Such realism seemed all the more necessary as the Presidential election in the United States began to put a premium on outspoken assertiveness. The challenging resolutions passed at the Cincinnati Convention probably owed much to the fact that the Convention's Chairman, Richard M. Johnson, hoped for the Democratic nomination, and at the end of the year President Tyler, with the election obviously in mind, made his message to Congress into a bid for support on the Oregon boundary, for which he claimed the northern frontier of $54^{\circ} 40'$, with a recommendation that a chain of military posts should be set up to protect American immigrants.

Aberdeen was still hopeful for a moderate settlement and ready to accept a boundary at 49° so long as the whole of Vancouver Island remained British and, with Simpson prompting both the Foreign Secretary and the British minister in Washington, the Americans were offered a free port either on the Strait of de Fuca or at the southern end of Vancouver Island as a solution to some of their problems. This was a reasonably firm response to the threat implied in President Tyler's message to Congress. But when the American campaign changed its tone on the nomination of James J. Polk as Democratic candidate, with a programme crying for the 're-occupation' of Oregon, firm moderation gave place to a policy of resistance. The undisguised threats of Polk made it impossible for

British statesmen to yield without a sacrifice of dignity which would soon have got them out of office.

These were days in which Peel's government had little Parliamentary strength in hand, even with Whig support over the Corn Laws. The debate on the Corn Laws was bitterly dividing the Tory party itself, and the situation precipitated by the abolition of the Corn Laws and the retention of the Navigation Acts was such as to make it almost seem as though Peel's government was determined to drive Canada into the arms of the United States. Aberdeen looked to the Hudson's Bay men, both to get their knowledge and to gauge the opposition which he might rouse. Simpson was in London from November 1844 to April 1845, as the government tried to get the policy of the new American government into focus, and at the end of March he submitted to Aberdeen his views on the possible bases of a treaty. Here he cheerfully suggested that Lewis River (the Snake) would be an acceptable frontier; but readily abandoning that rather outrageous suggestion, he seriously advocated the 49th parallel from the Rockies to the sea. We should then insist on Vancouver Island, with the right of free navigation in the Strait of de Fuca as the best approach to Fraser River, and free navigation of the Columbia itself as the only practicable route to cross the mountains and communicate with the east. The land occupied by the Puget's Sound Company, at Cowlitz Farm, Multnomah Island and near Fort Vancouver, should be secured, as should the posts on the Columbia and the Umpqua and all other establishments, together with the water privileges on the Willamette. This was in effect to propose the Strait of de Fuca boundary which Simpson had had in mind since 1842, together with the 'possessory rights' reservations which had then been mooted.

Simpson had on his shoulders at this time the troubles of American competition and private trade at Red River. At the heart of the problem lay the American frontier, with Kittson ready to trade furs at Pembina, with St. Peter within carriage distance as a source of supplies to challenge the Company's monopoly, and with American institutions and doctrines to rouse the restless *métis* and half-breeds to defiance of the charter and claims to the soil. Obstinate defying the Company, more truculent than the supple McDermot, was James Sinclair, half-breed son of William Sinclair, a Company's officer and brother of a Chief Factor in the Company, who had led the emigrants from Red River to the Willamette in 1841. He was suspected of an ambition to be elected chief of the half-breeds, and he was not to be moved. A challenge to the Company's right to the

soil was implicit in his position, and with Louis Riel at his elbow and Norman Kittson and the American traders to encourage and support him, he revealed a strong possibility that Red River, like Canada and Oregon, would succumb to the lure of the States as the half-breeds framed a petition to Congress asking to be admitted to the rights of American citizens as they settled in American territory. For Simpson, and for the Governor and Committee, the issues of Oregon and of Red River were parts of a common problem. Both involved challenges to the Company's trade, based upon settler intervention which in different forms denied the Company's claim to the soil; both turned upon importation from America of goods in opposition to the Company's store, and in both there was, in 1845, a barely concealed threat of American military intervention. At least, so the story could be told; though Simpson knew at heart that the military danger at Red River was negligible and that troops there would chiefly be valuable for preserving order and for overawing the *métis*. Before he left England in April 1845, Simpson had been closeted with Peel and with Aberdeen and had given his views on the need, and the means, for defending British North America against the threat which had been uttered in the newly-elected President Polk's inaugural speech, with its defiance of British claims.

Simpson's private opinion was that Polk's speech was mainly an act in domestic American politics, designed to please the Loco Foco party. But the reaction of the British statesmen was too good an opportunity to be missed. He asked for a small force of regular soldiers at Red River, with reinforcements from the half-breeds on the same lines as the East India Company troops. For Oregon he wanted four warships, two of them steamers, a force of marines, and a battery on Cape Disappointment to command entry to the river, while the Company would recruit a half-breed force for which the army would supply officers. He reiterated his suggestions that the boundary should be fixed either at Snake River or at 49°, with Vancouver Island and rights of navigation on the Columbia and in the Strait of de Fuca reserved to the British; and he claimed that the present possessions should be guaranteed to the Company 'as a matter of course'.

It seemed, soberly, improbable that war could be averted in 1845 except at a heavy cost in national prestige. Simpson was given the closest attention, and the two ministers authorised him to pay up to a thousand pounds 'in any measures I might consider it advisable to take under existing circumstances in reference to our claims on the

Oregon Territory'—whether on fortifications, legal advice, or political corruption is not quite clear. Aberdeen, too, at Simpson's request, had told the British minister in Washington to keep Simpson informed of developments and Simpson already had his personal avenues of communication to both Pakenham as British minister and to Lord Metcalfe the new Governor-General of Canada. On landing in America he went straight from Boston to Washington to consult Pakenham, and there learned that the British minister discounted the sabre-rattling and thought that most Americans wanted an amicable settlement.

Lord Metcalfe, however, was more impressed by the need for action. With a distinguished career in India behind him, Metcalfe proposed Indian coolie immigration, in a modified and militarised form, as a solution for the Oregon problem. He was convinced that Canada must be prepared to defend herself. This was the other side to the movement for responsible government. A strong school of British statesmen placed heavy emphasis on the costs of defence, and Metcalfe urged that Canadians must be told of the British determination to *sacrifice the Canadas* (and he underlined the words) rather than incur unlimited expenditure of men and means in defending them. But at the same time Metcalfe stressed the urgent need to occupy the disputed territory in Oregon, and he suggested this should be done by a force composed half of Europeans and half of native troops from India. Further, he sent to Simpson Lieutenants H. J. Warre and M. Vavasour, to be briefed by Simpson and to be sent on a military survey to Oregon. There they were to report on the proposal to erect a battery on Cape Disappointment, and if their report was favourable Simpson was to occupy the spot and was to charge the cost to government as arranged with Peel. This presumably was in reference to Simpson's power to spend up to a thousand pounds, and the mission of the two young officers certainly derived from Simpson's conversations before he left England, for the proposal had been made then.

Simpson's correspondence at this time exudes a strange ebullience. There can be no doubt that he found it most stimulating to be consulted at a high diplomatic level, nor that his faculties were quickened by the thought that he was giving advice which might well lead to military action. To the two young officers he developed detailed plans for the defence of Red River, and for preserving English influence over the region, and he travelled with them from Montreal to Red River. From there he sent them on to the Columbia, ostensibly in pursuit of sport, under the care of Ogden.

They travelled fast (too fast for sport) and arrived at Fort Vancouver in August 1845, only to find that Cape Disappointment and other strategic situations at the river mouth had already been taken in possession by American immigrants. Ogden advised the army officers to buy out the Americans; they both refused to take the responsibility and scornfully Ogden took it upon himself.

Ogden was acting in harmony with Simpson's wishes and instructions. Negotiations had taken a turn for the worse during the summer as Pakenham rejected an American offer to settle the boundary at 49° but to allow use of free ports south of that line on Vancouver Island to the British. However much Simpson may have had his tongue in his cheek over the military danger at Red River, there can be little doubt that he was seriously afraid that the Oregon dispute would lead to war—and, of course, a war between Great Britain and the United States would not be confined to the Pacific coast, so that the danger at Red River must properly be judged as part of the danger in Oregon. His correspondence with statesmen may well be taken as pressure-talk, but his instructions within the Company were realistic, and they betray the greatest uneasiness. He ordered McLoughlin and his Committee of Management to turn Fort Vancouver into a second-rate depot at which nothing but the outfits which were to go inland up the Columbia were to be stored. The ship from England was only to call there after she had unloaded most of her cargo, and the post was to be maintained on the strictest military basis, with a twenty-four hours' continuous watch to guard against any surprise attack, while the Company's business at the Falls of the Willamette was to be concentrated as much as possible. This was a reorganisation which shows Simpson's readiness to accept the feeling prevailing in Canada, that war with the United States was almost inevitable.

At the same time, during the summer months of 1845, Simpson was urging Pelly to press upon the government the need for garrison troops, and in personal interviews he was urging the same necessity upon Lord Metcalfe. As has been seen, the Company's solicitations were eventually successful, and the garrison was sent to Red River, sailing from Cork on 26th June, 1846. The Oregon boundary had been settled ten days before that date, and enough time had also elapsed for much discussion, in the course of which Warre and Vavasour's opinion that cavalry and guerilla forces would be most effective had merged with Metcalfe's view that Canada must organise and pay for her own defence, with Stanley's opinion that west of Sault Ste. Marie the Company should raise, organise and

equip any necessary defence force, and with Gladstone's dictum that 'a Chartered Proprietary Company' had not the same right to protection as a Crown Colony. Simpson, optimistic and eager to do a deal, had put his reaction to much of this thought into a closely-calculated offer to transport and supply the troops at fixed prices. But Warre and Vavasour had reported against travel by way of Canada and Lake Superior, and the troops eventually came to Red River by way of York Factory.

The two officers had in fact made a workmanlike report of their journey, and Warre showed a respectable talent for landscape sketching. But Ogden and the fur-traders formed a low estimate of their character and abilities, as of their naval brother-officers. Warre and Vavasour were on a tour of the Willamette settlement when Lieutenant Peel, R.N. (son of the Prime Minister) and Captain Parke of the Royal Marines arrived at Fort Vancouver in September 1845. They came from H.M.S. *America*, Captain the Honourable John Gordon (brother of Lord Aberdeen), which had been ordered to Puget Sound as the American attitude became threatening. Near at hand, once more, was H.M.S. *Modeste*, Captain Baillie, which came in to anchor at New Dungeness in October. Neither of the naval captains was vitally alive to the issues of Oregon, but Gordon sent Peel and Parke to survey the territory and to make a report. The naval and the military officers worked together, and none of them impressed the fur-traders. But Simpson was impressed, especially as Gordon announced that he wished to show the Americans that 'our government are determined not to allow their rights to be encroached on'.

When Gordon had assessed the situation he lost no time in sending Peel back to London, to accompany and explain his report. Peel travelled fast, by way of Honolulu, Central America and Havana, and he delivered his report at the Foreign Office on 13th February, 1846. Round Peel's report, as round the visit of Captain Baillie in the *Modeste*, and the activities of Warre and Vavasour, there has gathered a legend of indifference and idleness, for Gordon was disappointed in the fishing and hunting of the Columbia and the story spread that he reported Oregon as not worth fighting for because the Columbia salmon would not rise to a fly. In fact Gordon sent Peel's report home with all possible speed, and it was a workmanlike and factual report, detailing the size and layout of the colony. It seized the point in the Organic Laws, that they did not demand forfeiture of allegiance to the mother country, recounted the petition to Congress of August, 1845, asking for a 'distinct

territorial government' under American auspices, and explained that McLoughlin and the other officers of the Hudson's Bay Company had become members of the provisional government in order to protect themselves. Peel reported that the American immigrants did not receive help from the American government, and that most of their animosity against the Company vanished in their first year. The Company was the only trader; it supplied them when they were destitute, and took payment in wheat. It would be disastrous if the Company were suddenly to withdraw, for the whole economy was based on wheat, much of which was pledged for two years in advance. Peel reported also that there were rumours of a force of American dragoons on their way to Oregon.

British statesmen were moving towards acceptance of a boundary at the 49th parallel, with Vancouver Island and a right of navigation on the Strait of Juan de Fuca and up the Columbia reserved to the Company. These were the terms which Simpson had thought reasonable in 1844, and by the end of 1845 Aberdeen, Peel, and Governor Pelly were all of that opinion. President Polk, however, had been elected with a mandate to vindicate the fullest American claims, and in his Message to Congress of December 1845 he withdrew nothing. A British offer of arbitration was declined, and Polk in his message stood by the claim that the American right was clear and unquestionable, and asked Congress to terminate the Joint Occupation agreement. This was an attitude which enabled Simpson to press home his plea to the commander of the British forces in Canada and to set in train the arrangements for bringing troops to Red River. But the British politicians, although they found no weakening of the claim—they could hardly have expected any in a speech which was designed for domestic American consumption—began to see hopes of a reasonable settlement either by arbitration or by direct negotiation. British newspaper opinion was in favour of a negotiated settlement, and the offer made by Gallatin during the 1827 negotiations was invoked to give some sort of precedent for insistence on the 49th parallel with the right of navigation in the Strait of de Fuca and on Columbia River.

On such a basis the Company was very willing to agree; indeed, Simpson was convinced that if the 49th parallel was to be accepted as the boundary to the sea, then (notwithstanding his earlier protestations) the right to use the Columbia for access to the interior could not be of any importance. Grave as were the domestic and foreign dangers threatening the Peel government—with the Spanish Marriage, famine in Ireland, war in India and the repeal of the

Corn Laws, all active problems—Aberdeen was prepared to insist on the 49th parallel. But in January 1846 Pakenham was instructed to offer arbitration by a mixed commission with a neutral umpire, or by a board of distinguished jurists. This was rejected by the American Secretary of State, James Buchanan, because it seemed to be an open invitation to divide the country—and this might leave the United States with no satisfactory harbour. Nevertheless Aberdeen remained sure that a settlement on the 49th parallel would prove possible; and Pakenham reported that although his offer had been rejected there was a majority in the Senate in favour of equitable partition and compromise. In 1823 and 1824 John Quincy Adams as Secretary of State had proclaimed that the United States had no claim save that of occupation. He made the point again in 1846, and John C. Calhoun, the 'wily old lawyer' whom Douglas so mistrusted, and who had spun out the negotiations through 1845, now forcibly told the Senate that none of the agreements gave any firm title to Oregon; all was subject to negotiation, and further insistence on Polk's claim to $54^{\circ} 40'$ could only lead to war.

Aberdeen's confidence proved justified, for Polk's programme had included the 're-annexation' of Texas as well as the 're-occupation' of Oregon; and Texas led to California. Texas involved, too, the powerful issue of slavery, and the predominance within the United States of northern or southern states, in a way which Oregon did not. In Texas, as in Oregon, a group of American immigrants had set up their independent 'Lone Star' republic and had asked for admission to the United States. Aberdeen had been ready, in 1844, to guarantee a loan if the independent 'Lone Star' republic would agree to abolish slavery, and it was in the circumstances of this British effort to stabilise an independent anti-slavery republic to the south-west, cutting American expansion off from California and providing a refuge for runaway slaves, that Polk had put Texas on his agenda. California was the main objective, and Captain Gordon, however indifferent to the value of Oregon he may have seemed, was alive to this danger. He reported the presence of American ships and an American commodore on the coast and warned that on the first appearance of a war with Mexico the United States would take possession, and California would fall under the control of 'Americans of the worst description'.

In February 1845 Congress had decided to accept the Texans' petition to be admitted to the United States, but Mexico had broken off diplomatic relations, protesting that Texas was nothing but a rebellious province. Polk, taking his stand upon a plebiscite in favour

of annexation, had stationed American troops upon the Texan frontier to intercept any Mexican attack. This in itself could well be taken as an invasion of Mexican territory, but Polk was also busy through 1845 in fomenting disaffection in California with promises that 'if the people should desire to unite their destiny with ours, they would be received as brethren'. Then, when his efforts to make the most of American claims had resulted in a revolt against the Herrera government and dominance by the anti-American General Paredes in Mexico, he ordered his troops to cross the Nueces River and to occupy the left bank of the Rio Grande del Norte. Even at this stage the internal situation of Mexico was such that war could probably have been averted if Polk's real ambition had only been for the annexation of Texas. But he was anxious not to lose the chance to get California also, and by early May he had rejected Mexican overtures and was preparing for war. Following a frontier incident, in which Mexican troops skirmished with the advanced Americans at the Rio Grande (well beyond any possible American territory, even of Texas) he warned Congress that 'the cup of forbearance has been exhausted'; 'American blood had been shed on American soil', he alleged—and Congress declared that 'by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between that Government and the United States'.

Aberdeen resigned office at the end of June 1846, and one of his last acts was to tell the Mexican government that they had been repeatedly and urgently warned of their danger, and that Britain was not going to engage in a war in which she had no personal quarrel. His successor, Palmerston, was equally convinced that it would be folly to break with the United States over Mexico—and so Texas, New Mexico and California, were ceded to the United States. Polk was convinced that in California, as in Oregon, he was forestalling a British expansion. But although the idea must have crossed men's minds, and Mexico actually offered to sell California to Britain, no move in this direction was made, and the British were heartily glad that the Mexican diversion made even Polk ready to pacify Britain by an agreed solution of the Oregon boundary.

If the thing could be arranged without raising issues of honour and pride, the chances of a peaceful outcome were good. Although Congress gave the requisite notice of the end of the Treaty of Joint Occupation in April 1846, the notice was conveyed with all courtesy. The situation was apt for moderate men; but it was also probable that the chance of negotiating a settlement might well evaporate if Congress were allowed to adjourn. On 18th May, there-

fore, Aberdeen sent to Pakenham draft proposals for a treaty, and these Polk submitted to the Senate, which advised acceptance.

On 15th June, 1846, the Oregon Boundary Treaty was signed and another chapter in the history of the Company was ended. It had been a chapter in which the Company had been in the vanguard, staking out the British claim on the Pacific Coast. It was on the basis of actuality rather than of future development that the Company worked, and on this basis, of actual occupation, there can be little doubt that the Company was largely responsible for securing British Columbia in the treaty. For when the terms of the boundary were agreed it was obvious that the Company, despite Simpson's knowledge and Pelly's insistence, had exercised but little influence in formulating the British offer. The treaty settled the frontier at 49° from the Rockies to the coast; then Vancouver Island was left to the British. This was a solution which had indeed been in the minds of the Company's officers for many years, but it was accepted for reasons of state, not of Company policy. This boundary sacrificed the Company's trade south of 49° at a time when the average annual profit from Fort Vancouver alone was over £30,000 and when the average annual profit from the other posts in Oregon, i.e. south of the Columbia, was over £10,000.

The right of navigation on the Columbia was indeed conceded, and this had at one time been a point in the Company's programme. But by 1846 the Company had ceased to agitate for this, and its inclusion was due to the salving of national pride by harking back to Gallatin's offer of 1827. This clause, moreover, was considered by responsible American opinion as referring only to the Company, to the exclusion of other British subjects, and as granted only so as to give the Company access to its inland posts. The right of navigating the river would therefore last as long as the current Licence of Exclusive Trade, till 1858. The clauses had been put to the Senate, before acceptance, and this interpretation seemed possible; it meant that if the Company disposed of its posts and other interests south of 49° the right of navigation would lose its value. So a right which the Americans thought was in any case terminable, but to which the British government attached a weight of national honour and which they eventually refused to consider solely as the right of the Company, became a vital element in any process by which the Company might realise on its possessory rights south of the new frontier.

Though the major clauses of the treaty were probably not much influenced by the Company's representations, the Governor had worked with effect to secure protection for the Company's possessory

rights. Since the Puget's Sound Company also was involved, Pelly's representations were that 'all British American Subjects who are in possession shall be secured in their possessions' of the lands and buildings which they occupied at the time of the treaty. Here he was successful, and secured respect for the 'possessory rights of the Hudson's Bay Company and of all British subjects who may already be in the occupation of Land or other property, lawfully acquired' south of the 49th parallel. A further article confirmed to the Puget's Sound Company its farms, land and other property, on the north side of the Columbia, with a reservation that if called for they should be transferred to the United States at a proper valuation. This would seem a real triumph for the Company; but not only were the 'possessory rights' tied in with the navigation of the Columbia, they were also embodied in dangerously loose phrases. The very expression 'possessory rights' was to require definition, especially in conjunction with the phrase 'lawfully acquired'; and the 'proper valuation' for the Puget's Sound lands proved by no means easy.

For the moment, however, it seemed as though the Company had stiffened the British negotiators by formulating its claim by actual possession, and in so doing had secured to itself rights which would prove valuable 'in these times of compensation and indemnities'. But even here the Company's policy was criticised. While advocating possessory rights, it had given the Americans claims exactly on those lines, for the immigrant of whatever nationality was a customer and the Company wanted trade; and McLoughlin's personal attitude had led to a situation in which the Company could be accused of giving to the Americans that very claim by occupation with which it was most concerned. Captain Gordon had reported that the Company had encouraged immigration, and Warre and Vavasour had made so much of this that Simpson sent extracts of their reports for comment to the Committee of Management of the Columbia Department—a procedure which gave him the opportunity of a reproof that 'If facilities to the extent stated . . . have been afforded, it is quite at variance with the instructions issued from time to time by the Governor and Committee and by myself'.

McLoughlin took the reports as hearsay evidence retailed by men who had no responsibility for making decisions. There was little that was new in his rebuttal of the charges, but he was able to point out that he had asked for government protection in 1843 but had been told to protect the Company's property as best he could, and that in the event no British protection had been forthcoming. He was able to recount also the episode of Henry Williamson, an

American who had challenged the Company's right by putting up a log hut near to Fort Vancouver itself—a challenge in the form of a notice bearing the jingle

‘Meddle not with this house or claim
For under is the Master's name
Henry Williamson’.

McLoughlin destroyed the hut and removed the notice, and when Williamson came with a surveyor to mark out a claim, he explained the Company's position and appealed against Williamson to the well-intentioned citizens of Oregon. This he and Douglas did by an Address to the Citizens of Oregon in which they stressed that under the Treaty of Joint Occupation their ownership of land was entirely legal and, with respect for the provisional government, would be maintained. The provisional government agreed to ‘promote the amicable intercourse and kind feelings, hitherto existing, between ourselves and the Gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company, until the United States shall extend their jurisdiction over us’. This was, in the circumstances, a very proper view and Williamson, lacking support, withdrew.

Henry Williamson afforded McLoughlin an opportunity to show where he stood. Faced with the realities of the immigrants' needs, with his own desire to trade and to establish good relations with the government which he could foresee, he could expect little support from a British government which was not anxious to challenge the United States. But he was tenacious of his own rights and of those of the Company. Possession by right of prior occupation was to him sacrosanct; and it was these rights of prior occupation, established and defended by the Company, which drew a distinction between Oregon and Columbia. Without such claims it is most unlikely that British politicians would have challenged the vigorous American claim to $54^{\circ} 40'$, and British Columbia would have gone the same way as Oregon; fortified by the Company, the British statesmen secured the frontier on the mainland at 49° , and so Columbia remained British.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE COMPANY AND OREGON

Although the Oregon boundary was settled without armed conflict it did little to salve national pride, to preserve the Peel ministry in power, or to safeguard the real interests of the Company. Palmerston, once more at the Foreign Office after Peel had been brought down by the Repeal of the Corn Laws (actually defeated in the House on a Coercion Bill for Ireland) grimly noted that the treaty gave the Americans everything they wanted; and the Hudson's Bay men felt the same. The Company had failed to make good its claims in the face of agricultural settlement. The problem had been complicated by international rivalry, by the need for government support, and by the personality and policy of John McLoughlin. But from the Company's point of view the problem turned round the ultimate impossibility of keeping settlers off land which attracted them, or of regulating their trade or their relations with Indians once they had settled.

At Red River the Company already knew the weight of this problem; in Columbia and on Vancouver Island it developed rapidly after the Oregon Treaty, and for the remainder of the period till 1870 the Company was feeling its way reluctantly towards the only possible solution—the abandonment of its territorial rights on the best terms which could be got. Certainly the possessory rights which the Company retained in Oregon would best be disposed of as soon as possible. Some of the land kept for the Company and for the Puget's Sound Company, like Fort Vancouver and the Cowlitz Farm, had been opened and claimed early and because it was needed; other areas had been more formally claimed, to forestall American moves, with compensation in mind.

The claims were therefore of mixed value; but there never was any serious doubt that the 'possessory rights' left to the Company in Oregon Territory by the treaty should be sold. This was the intention as soon as the treaty had been analysed. In January 1847 Simpson was instructed to call at Washington on his way to England. But he guessed then that 'The Mexican war has drained the United States coffers to such a degree that, I have very slender hopes of coming to any agreement with that Government in regard to our possessions south of 49° whereby an immediate outlay of money

would be required'. A commission to settle the matter seemed open to question since the two parties would not be equal, with the Company on one hand and the United States government on the other.

The citizens of Oregon did not take on tolerance and wisdom by the simple operation of becoming citizens of the United States. New immigrants brought typhus and measles and dysentery; a mixed cross-section of the adventurous and the unsuccessful, they found effective government difficult and had no answer ready to hand when at the end of 1847 the sixty-odd members of the Whitman mission were seized by the Cayuse Indians among whom they worked near Walla Walla. The missionary, his wife, ten men and four children, were killed and the remaining forty-seven members of the mission were held prisoners. The Legislature of Oregon could do nothing. But Ogden set off from Fort Vancouver, across American territory, 'ransomed' the victims and led them back to Oregon City. It was a triumph of the courage, knowledge, and confidence of the fur-trader in a situation which had been precipitated by the ignorance and over-confidence of the settler. Moderate men in Oregon knew how raw and vulnerable they were as a community. But there was a vigorous purposefulness about the settlement which redressed the balance. While Douglas and the Company's men remained neutral, the Americans swore to revenge the massacre, and though Douglas refused to loan arms or equipment to the provisional government for a punitive expedition the necessary provisions were advanced against the personal security of Governor Abernethy and two of his legislators, and Colonel Gilliam forcibly took possession of some gunpowder from the post at Walla Walla. There was every reason to fear that the Company would run into trouble both with the Americans and with the Indians, for there was about the Americans a sturdiness which roused Douglas's admiration but which almost inevitably showed itself in aggressiveness.

In July 1846 the American naval schooner *Shark* visited the Columbia, and her presence gave courage to the 'Lone American Party'. The result was a rush of speculators to settle near Fort Vancouver. Douglas appealed to the claim registered in the Oregon Land Office in the name of one of the Company's servants, secured the imprisonment of the leading squatter, and ended the incident with the approval of the American commander. But there was obviously a deep animosity at work, as the citizens showed by their action against John McLoughlin even after he had left the Company's employment and had become an American citizen. The

Oregon Land Donation Law of 1850 deprived him of his claim at the Falls; Abernethy Island was given to the American milling company, and the rest of the property was put at the disposal of the Legislative Assembly, the proceeds to be used for the endowment of a University. McLoughlin had been five years dead before the Legislative Assembly corrected this injustice in 1862, and in the meantime it had become very clear that the Company could hope for no better treatment.

Since the Oregon Land Law of 1845 had forbidden any single person to claim more than one square mile of territory the Company's officers had put in 'men of straw', employees who registered claims on the best lands near Fort Vancouver, Puget Sound and Nisqually, and then transferred their claims to the Company. Encroachments by squatters, and defiance of the Company's claims, were inevitable and almost immediate, and as soon as the terms of the treaty were made public, Governor Pelly asked Palmerston to secure recognition of the claims registered by the Company's servants, and to press for American purchase of the possessory rights, as covered by the treaty. Pelly received sympathetic attention and was allowed to put forward his views both for the territory 'now become exclusively British' and for the possessory rights south of 49°. He was allowed to take copies of the government's papers and maps, and he suggested £40,000 as a fair valuation for the Puget's Sound Company's lands, keeping for the moment in reserve the Company's own claims. Simpson would have taken £30,000 for the Puget's Sound claims and £70,000 for the Company's, and he thought that the American government, though careful of dollars, would not be fastidious and would make a settlement in round figures rather than submit to a commission and spin the discussions out for several years at great expense. It was probable that the first difficulties would come as a result of squatters trying to settle on the grazing lands claimed by the Puget's Sound Company near the posts, whereas the posts south of 49°, in the Indian country, would not immediately be encroached on and they would give access to the Indians throughout the Oregon Territory.

This last was a point which was soon to cause discussion. The Snake Country expeditions still paid, but difficulties were obviously just round the corner. A good trade in 1842 had been followed by moderate success in 1843 as American opposition and the poverty of the over-trapped country began to tell, and the expedition of 1845 was attacked by Indians near Great Salt Lake and fled in panic. But Forts Hall and Boisé continued a reasonable trade in furs, and the

old policy of maintaining the Snake Country trade as long as it covered expenses was now reinforced by the argument that to withdraw would bar any plea for compensation. Moreover these posts, well sited on the trails from America, began to profit increasingly from trade to immigrants, and especially to the Mormons. The Company declined the Mormons' proposals for permanent trade and the latter eventually set up their own stores in rivalry; but in the meantime shop sales to immigrants counteracted the decline in fur returns. Nevertheless the right to trade with the Indians was a valuable one, certainly valuable enough to vindicate and to demand compensation for. But such a right was by no means necessarily included in the possessory rights confirmed by the treaty.

There could be little question of the Company's right to its actual posts. These, south of the new frontier, consisted of Fort Colville, the Flathead post, Okanagan, Walla Walla or Nez Percés, Fort Hall, Fort Boise, Fort Vancouver, Umpqua, and Fort George (on the land which Ogden had bought at Cape Disappointment), to which were added Nisqually and the Cowlitz Farm as the property of the Puget's Sound Company. The posts had only been established by the Company in order to trade, and so the right to trade was implicit in the possession of the posts. Simpson was clear on this point, 'In speaking of compensation it would be for giving up all our trade South of 49°'. But the right to trade was soon to be challenged.

In 1849-50 the American government had bought some Hudson's Bay blankets to distribute as gifts to the Indians. They used the Company's men to make the distribution, and almost inevitably the Indians were told that the Company was making the gift. Questions were raised, and the Company was under fire; the superintendant of Indian affairs in Oregon was instructed to buy American goods in future and that 'under no circumstances should the Company be permitted to have trading establishments within the limits of our territory'. Such posts would be contrary to American law, for Oregon had been brought under the general American law controlling trade with Indians and this (the law of 30th June, 1834) forbade any licence to trade with Indians being given to a foreigner. In American legal practice this law was held to override the Oregon Treaty, but obviously no such unilateral interpretation would be easily acceptable, especially as the Company's trade was still an essential part of the life of Oregon. The question went to the Secretary of State while the Indian Agent in Oregon, Anson Dart, delayed execution and suggested that the best solution would be to buy out the Company's possessory rights. Simpson had originally

put the Company's claim for losing its trade south of 49° at £100,000, but by August 1846 he had admitted that it was past its 'palmy days' and was worth only £50,000. Already the Company's stores were beginning to feel competition, although the Fort Vancouver shop showed a profit of £14,902 in 1849-50.

At this rate posts, Indian trade and sales-shops, were all highly vulnerable, and the possessory rights as a whole were in the market, to be sold as soon as the price could be agreed. Simpson was exceedingly anxious to sell and to end the matter. But both the Company and the American government were hard bargainers and the situation was delicate and important. While the Americans were fully alive to the necessity for 'relieving this territory from the presence of foreign corporations in our midst', the United States was pledged to maintain the possessory rights, whatever meaning might attach to that phrase. Secretary of State William L. Marcy produced the necessary definition in 1853 when he instructed the Governor of Washington Territory that the Company's right to land was not under discussion, but that it conveyed no right to trade within American territory.

As American opinion took definite shape the Company had not been idle. Simpson had the buildings and improvements valued by the Company's officers. Work, Douglas and Ogden, between them estimated £75,000 in round figures as the worth of the buildings and improvements of the two companies (Hudson's Bay and Puget's Sound) south of 49°, not including pasture lands claimed but neither fenced nor improved. Simpson could foresee trouble on this score, and was more than ever anxious to sell out. But in the face of spirited opposition from the individuals concerned (who naturally expected compensation) he absorbed on behalf of the Company the claims to land which had been registered by individual servants of the Company. This took some years and was not complete till 1850, Ogden being one of the main obstructionists; he eventually got his compensation from the Company. In the meantime Simpson was at Washington as early as February 1847, ready to do a deal for about £100,000 but finding that Polk's government had lost control of Congress and that negotiation was well-nigh impossible.

In normal practice Simpson would always exact the last penny in a bargain, but he would never set his price so high that he could not defend it as based upon a real valuation. In his Washington negotiations for sale of the possessory rights, however, he so mismanaged affairs as to create the impression that he was asking a price which was twice the proper value. For this he had to blame his use of

George M. Sanders, a plausible 'contact man' on the fringes of Democratic political circles. Originally Sanders put himself forward on behalf of a syndicate which proposed to float a joint-stock company which would buy the Company's rights for half-a-million dollars in the hope of selling them later to the American government at a profit. No money was to pass, for the Hudson's Bay Company was then to advance the purchase price to Sanders' new company as capital with which mail-steamers for the Pacific coast would be built. Eventually, when the sale of the rights to the American government had gone through, the Hudson's Bay Company was to be paid. Simpson rejected this proposal, so Sanders then put himself forward as go-between with access to the Polk government. Simpson thought him 'a very Keen, intelligent active man and has a good deal of influence with the Polk administration, but is not to be trusted too far', accepted him in this role, and promised him ten thousand dollars commission if he could sell the rights for half-a-million dollars. This figure, on which Simpson was negotiating, represented fairly enough the price of £100,000 which he thought the real value of the rights, and the negotiations seemed to be developing quite well until February 1848, when they ended abruptly because the Americans thought the price too high.

At this stage it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Simpson was toying with corruption, unknown to Pelly and the London Committee. He wrote to London that his personal opinion was that the Company would be well shot of the business and that he would willingly sell for £50,000, though he could do nothing on his own. But then he was forced to write again and to excuse himself—and one of the most remarkable things in Simpson's career is the fact that almost never did he have to excuse himself to the Committee. Instead of a hundred thousand pounds (or half-a-million dollars) the figure under discussion had been a million dollars! The difference was known only to Sanders and his friends, and would in part be used in securing the deal. Such a figure was, of course, far in excess of the value which Simpson put on the rights and it is not surprising that the Americans jibbed at it.

The revelation was all the more disconcerting to Pelly because Simpson, in justifying himself, took up the Governor for referring to the arrangement made in his 'correspondence' with Sanders. Simpson pointed out that it would be more correct to refer to his 'communication' since the arrangement included bribery of politicians which he would never have set down in correspondence! Pelly was deeply shocked, but when Sanders went to London in

March 1848 he secured an agreement which bound the Company to accept 410,000 dollars in United States bonds, to give Sanders $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of this, and all he could get from the Americans above that price. The terms of this agreement were not to be published, and Sanders was to make the best bargain he could get. He was given a year from the end of April 1848 in which to carry out his mission, and Henry Hulse Berens was sent to Washington with power to sign a deed on behalf of the Company.

There was a strong group within the Democratic party which was anxious to buy out the Company's claims, and it looked at one time as though the deal might go through. Had it done so, the price would have been a million dollars, for that was what Sanders asked and the politicians were prepared to pay: the difference would of course have been his to dispose of. But it was held up to get a valuation of the buildings and property, and during the recess Secretary of State Buchanan told a meeting of Berens, Simpson, Duncan Finlayson and the British Chargé d'Affaires that he was in favour of purchase at a million dollars, as was the President, but that such a purchase should clearly extinguish the right to navigate on the Columbia. In his view this could only properly be achieved by a new treaty between the two governments. Pelly in due course put these views to Lord Palmerston, only to be told that the right to navigate the Columbia involved British prestige and other British subjects; the Hudson's Bay Company alone could not sell the rights. On this point Palmerston stood firm; and American support died. A motion to purchase was defeated in the Senate in February 1849 and the new Secretary of State, John C. Calhoun, though himself anxious to make a deal, was unable to do anything until Congress re-assembled. Even then he did not risk definite action; but he got Sanders to agree to a sale at 700,000 dollars instead of the million which had been asked. Henceforth the Company was compromised; although all that it would have got from Sanders was its reasonable evaluation of the assets, it could no longer claim that it was negotiating on the basis of an honest price.

This failure coincided with other changes. Ogden and Douglas, by their personal stature, managed to keep the Company and its property at Fort Vancouver respected, but Work at Nisqually found it difficult to keep squatters off the pasture lands of the Puget's Sound Company. This was a situation which changed for the better in 1848-9 as the California Gold Rush eased the pressure of settlers; in 1848 two thousand families left the Willamette for California. As the pressure of the immigrants dropped, prices at the

Company's store rose, and though some of the Company's servants also went to seek their fortunes in the gold-fields the Company's position appeared to be stabilised when Oregon got its first Territorial Governor, Joseph Lane, a man friendly to the Company and with adequate force to keep order. Douglas thought he would act in the most liberal manner and would protect the Company's property.

But Governor Lane was between the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with his decision that the possessory rights involved no right to trade, and local federal officers who were even more prejudiced against the Company than the settlers. The Company's ships were forbidden to go direct from Victoria to Nisqually in 1850. They had to make the exasperating journey to Astoria for customs inspection. This took them three hundred and fifty miles out of their course, involved a double crossing of the dangerous bar of the Columbia, and heavy fees for pilotage. Moreover the first federal collector of customs at Astoria, John Adair, charged tolls not only on goods for trade in American territory but also on those destined for trade in the British territory north of 49°. When this decision was reversed in Washington, the collector at Olympia, Simpson P. Moses, proved even more hostile.

Moses got a chance to show his attitude when the brig *Mary Dare* and the steamer *Beaver* put in to Nisqually in November 1851. He seized them both, the *Mary Dare* because she had one package of unrefined sugar which, in contravention of an American law which made the minimum weight for such merchandise six hundred pounds, weighed only two hundred and sixty-eight pounds, and the *Beaver* for entering the port as in ballast when in fact she had no ballast. Though the *Beaver* had landed some passengers without clearance, he soon released her; but the *Mary Dare* was kept until the Company put in a bond for \$13,000 pending an appeal to the Secretary of the Treasury. The appeal resulted in the release of the ship on payment of costs by the Company, and the seizure of the *Beaver* was compensated for by a payment of a thousand dollars.

But officialdom was organising against the Company and its claims, and the Oregon Donation Act of 1850, which put McLoughlin out of his claim at the Falls, also put the Company's claims in jeopardy. Every male citizen over eighteen years of age was, under the Act, entitled to three hundred and twenty acres, and a wife brought a further three hundred and twenty acres to her husband. Douglas thought that this act would mean that for many years land would have little value in Oregon. Choice land, and especially land near at hand, nevertheless had value, and the authorities in Oregon

sold off the land between the buildings at Fort Vancouver, Nisqually and Cowlitz. At Fort Vancouver the situation was saved because the local army commander proclaimed the land round the post a military reservation and warned off those who had bought land there. But at the other posts settlers not only moved into the Puget's Sound Company's lands but also took that Company's cattle and sheep and intimidated the surveyors and maintenance men.

Local developments were keeping pace with central policy. While trade was declining from the Oregon posts, and possessory rights were being defined as not including the right to trade, the value of the rights was being ruined by local action, and the Company failed in a further attempt to deal with the federal government at Washington. Having found that the Americans considered a million dollars a reasonable price, the Company set its sights at that level when in 1852 it approached Secretary of State Daniel Webster through Robert Walker, who had been in Polk's cabinet, and who was to get ten per cent. of the price if he brought off the deal. Again the State Department insisted that any purchase of the Company's rights must be part of a new treaty in which the British government formally surrendered the right to navigation of the Columbia, and what Palmerston had refused to countenance was beyond the power of his successor Malmesbury, for the Derby government was too weak to run any risks.

Still eager to make a sale, the Company sent Simpson once more to Washington in 1853, and confided the affair to George Dallas, Vice-President of the United States under Polk, and to a Philadelphia lawyer, L. C. Levin. The British minister in Washington was a participant in the negotiations, and the price was now raised to a million and a half dollars. This gave room for a compromise at a million, and it was defended on the ground that land values in Oregon had increased. The high price might also stir the Americans to conclude the deal, for they based their moves on the assumption that every delay would bring a decline in the value of the rights. Despite the high standing of Dallas the negotiation was hampered by the revelation that on the previous occasion Sanders had undoubtedly made attempts to bribe senators. Discussions continued with emphasis on the fairness of the price and on the navigation of the Columbia, but the Americans were in no hurry, for they reckoned they were dealing with a declining asset and at last, in January 1855, the State Department made an offer of only 300,000 dollars. Simpson, protesting vigorously, would probably have accepted this bid, but a motion to purchase was defeated in the Senate in March, and again in December 1855.

The low American offer was to some extent due to the argument that the Company's Licence for Exclusive Trade would cease in 1859, and that the rights would then cease to hold any value. When Polk had submitted the draft terms of the Boundary Treaty to the Senate that body had rejected attempts to limit the possessory rights to the period of the licence. Yet, in discussing this aspect of the treaty with the British minister, Secretary of State Buchanan had said (and had asked the minister to repeat to Aberdeen) that this advice of the Senate was given on the assumption that the right to navigate the Columbia would cease with the Licence for Exclusive Trade, on 30th May, 1859. The British government tacitly accepted this view, and the American Senate made no reservation and again voted down a proposal to insert a definite term of years for the possessory rights when the signed treaty was presented for ratification.

In such a situation it was doubtful if the American government would move in on the Company's claims; but little would be done to protect them. Local officials would be given instructions tuned to the American interpretation of the treaty, and the Company's rights would be assessed against their cessation in the near future and against the inroads to which they would be subject.

Into this picture come the decisions of the Indian Department to deny to the Company the right to trade with Indians as a corollary of possession of the posts. In 1854 Governor Stevens of Washington warned Ogden to wind up the Company's affairs in his territory. Ogden ignored the warning and continued to trade at Walla Walla, Fort Boisé and Fort Hall, until the Indian wars into which the Americans had stumbled made these posts unsafe. Then, in October 1855, Walla Walla was abandoned at the orders of the American Indian Agent, who feared for the lives of the Hudson's Bay men, and Fort Boisé and Fort Hall were closed during the winter. In due course a bill for loss of trade and for goods destroyed was presented, but the bill was greatly inflated and was bound to be disputed; it could not in any case be set against steady losses in trade. By the end of 1855 the only active post left on American soil was Fort Colville with its outposts at the Kootenay and the Flatheads. Even there trade was completely disrupted by the American policy of buying Indian claims to lands and concentrating the Indians on reserves, and by the wars which resulted. Trade was falling off 'not in consequence of any fault of the Company, but owing to the want of that protection from the United States Government which they had a right to look for under the treaty of 1846'.

Yet the Company retained Fort Colville to maintain the possessory

rights until they should be bought out, although the staff was reduced to a minimum and preparations were made to take the post to the north bank of the river. This retention of Colville was in its way a provocative act, for the more outspoken Americans accused the Company's traders of providing arms and ammunition to the Indians and (later) of buying from them horses which had been stolen from American troops. The difficulties which the Company faced were grave, for its men lived by trading with the Indians, and they lived with the Indians, finding them generally quiet and well-behaved. In their own territories, apart from an occasional expedition to punish murderers or wreckers, they were reaching a point at which the tribes themselves gave up the offenders to white justice.

Simpson put the Company's view, and faced the outcome for the Indians and for the fur trade as inevitable, when he wrote that 'The intercourse of Americans with the natives of this continent has always been of a hostile character, their object being to remove the aborigine from the soil as the first step towards its occupation by the whites'. Douglas made his own explanation: 'I am of opinion that there must have been some great mismanagement on the part of the American authorities or it is hardly credible that the natives of Oregon, whose character has been softened and improved by fifty years of commercial intercourse with the establishments of the Hudson's Bay Company, would otherwise exhibit so determined a Spirit of hostility against any white people'. He rebutted the accusation that the Company must be involved because it was immune from attack, and he pointed out that he sent effective forces to protect the Company's lands, that he kept the coastal Indians from joining the confederacy up-country, that he offered protection to any settler, and that he was willing to send a ship to keep order. But he would not make war on the Indians, and he contrasted the desperate courage of the Indians with the inefficiency of the American soldiers and sailors. He foresaw that the British would soon be faced with the choice of garrisoning the frontier or of allowing the Americans to pursue and suppress the Indians within our territories.

The possessory rights were becoming a profitless burden, and orders for a federal survey 'up to the actual settlements of the British claimants' made it clear that the Company would have to define its land claims either by enclosure or by precise legal entitlement. The only hope of a settlement which could be in any way acceptable to the Company lay in the intervention of the British government, and as the Crimean War drew to a close it began to seem possible that the Earl of Clarendon as Foreign Secretary might take a favourable

course. But at this juncture the friendly Minister at Washington, John Crampton, was dismissed for enlisting volunteers for the Crimean War and it was not until Lord Napier was appointed to Washington in 1857 that the Company's case could be adequately put. But although the new President, elected in 1857, was that James Buchanan who had been willing to pay the Company a million dollars when he was Secretary of State in 1848, there was an immediate breakdown on the question of price since the new American ministers now offered only three hundred thousand dollars, the price offered in 1855. Napier was deeply shocked, and lost much of his enthusiasm, when it was proved to him that the Company which was using him to demand a million dollars had in 1848 been prepared to accept no more than four hundred and ten thousand dollars.

The opportunity was in any case lost as Napier was replaced by Lord Lyons, and as the Licence for Exclusive Trade ended on 30th May, 1859, the American authorities, federal and territorial alike, acted as though all claims to the possessory rights had ceased therewith. First the General Land Office instructed the Surveyor General of Washington Territory to include the Company's lands in his surveys, and about 33,000 acres on the Lower Columbia were subdivided 'to the great satisfaction of the settlers'. Already the American army had told Dugald Mactavish that the lands kept as a military reservation belonged to the army, and in March 1860 Brigadier Harney told the Company's Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver that the possessory rights had expired and he must move since the army wished to use the land. The Company's representative, Alexander Dallas, was convinced that Harney had the American government behind him in his move, for it was known that the Secretary of War fully endorsed the brigadier's action. So although the Governor and Committee in London ordered Dallas to maintain possession of the Company's property, he decided to abandon Fort Vancouver on 10th May, 1860. The Company's trade on American soil was by 1860 clearly ruined; even at Colville the profit was only £107 and the enclosures and pasture lands there were invaded by squatters. Agricultural values, and the possibilities of settlement, had driven out the Company.

As the Governor of Washington informed his legislature that it had been decided that the Company's rights were merely a licence to trade and did not convey title to the soil, and as the Secretary of the Interior reported that the possessory rights terminated 'on the expiration of the Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company', it seemed as though the American government was solid behind this view, and

it mattered little that the Charter and the Licence for Exclusive Trade should be confused. But the Company vigorously rebutted this view, and Lord Lyons protested strongly at Washington against 'a spoliation so unjust and unprovoked'—so strongly that in June 1860 Secretary of State Lewis Cass expressed regret that the terms of the Treaty of 1846 should seem to have been infringed. He denied the right of subordinates to decide such questions, and he ordered the military in Oregon to hold off until the rights had been amicably settled between the two governments.

The 'retreat' of the American government was largely due to the preliminary rumblings of the American Civil War. John Brown tried to capture Harper's Ferry in October 1859, and his failure and execution gave the Abolitionists their martyr and their battle song as the election took Abraham Lincoln to the White House despite a Republican programme centred round the slogan 'Vote Yourself a Farm', with emphasis on the public lands in the west, a homestead act, the admission of Kansas as a free state, and the building of a railway to the Pacific coast. In effect the American government turned its attention from the west to the south, and although this meant that Lord Lyons was able to secure a disavowal of the expropriations in Oregon it also meant that while the issue of the Civil War hung in the balance little attention and no money could be devoted to buying out the Company. It was not until 1863 that anything could be achieved. By that time England's attitude, especially on matters of the building of warships in England and of blockade-running, was highly important in the conduct of the American Civil War. Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, could see no point in prolonging the dispute in Oregon and was ready to negotiate, and the Company again pressed Lyons to suggest a settlement.

At last, on 1st July, 1863, a convention was agreed that a joint commission should settle the long dispute. The Company appointed Charles Day, formerly Solicitor-General of Lower Canada, as its attorney, while Caleb Cushing was to plead the American case. The Commission was to consist of John Rose, the Company's Canadian Counsel and a member of the Canadian Assembly (named by the Company) and Alexander Johnson, formerly Judge of the Court of Appeals of New York (named by the United States). Judge Curtis, recently retired from the Supreme Court, was gladly accepted as umpire by both sides. In June 1864 Congress accepted the arrangement and voted money for the commission's work, and in May 1865 the joint commission began to hear evidence.

Fort Colville and Okanagan were still in the Company's possession,

but for the rest the possessory rights had virtually been abandoned. The question was what compensation should be paid. There was no urgency in the matter once the commission had got to work and had minimised the danger of an international incident; nor were the problems under discussion simple. They taxed the legal and financial ability of the attorneys for both sides, and of the two commissioners. It, therefore, took yet a further four years to reach a conclusion, but at last in September 1869 the commissioners made their award without having to call in the umpire.

The verdict gave to the Company over twice the sum it had at one time been offered—450,000 dollars for the Company's own rights and 200,000 for those of the Puget's Sound Company. This fell short of the million dollars which had been hoped for, but an attempt to deduct arrears of taxes, which the Puget's Sound Company had resisted as discriminatory, was abandoned and the compensation was paid in gold coin in 1870 and 1871. The solution brought an end to the long and fluctuating dispute, and it brought cash to the Company's coffers. It was of more importance to Anglo-American relations than to the Company's trade, for although the Company had shown the greatest tenacity in defence of its rights, it had accepted the vital decision before the start of the dispute. The Oregon Boundary Treaty had marked the victory of the American immigrant over the fur-trader; from that point the Company's policy was to exploit its rights, particularly in trading to the immigrants, for the brief period until settlement and American institutions took full control, and then to sell at the best price obtainable. It took twenty-five years before the sale was concluded, but the decision had been taken and the result might well have been achieved immediately after the Oregon Treaty.

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CHAPTER XXVII

VICTORIA AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Company's willingness to sell its possessory rights south of the 49th parallel was due to a realistic appraisal of the difficulties of trading in the face of American settlement. It was also due to the calculation that the territory left, between the American frontier at 49° and the Russian frontier at 54° 40', remained the basis for a profitable fur trade for many years to come. Year after year, as Simpson tried to dispose of the southern posts and accepted the inevitable decline of their trade, he checked and found the profits of the other posts west of the Rockies running, one year with another, at the level of about £30,000, and he was all the more prepared to sell Fort Vancouver because he was intent upon the development of Victoria. Here Simpson was by 1847 extolling Douglas's choice of site as admirably adapted for the purpose of developing the great depot for the west. With all its distractions, the trade was going well, the Russian contract was working smoothly, Taku and Stikine had been closed without trouble, Douglas had taken possession of Sitka and was allowed to trade with Indians there, the California business had been successfully wound up, and in 1848 the Russians even took in sale the accumulations of wheat which had been piling up for several years.

Hope centred round a full development of all the resources of the region. The fur trade alone was not to be predominant, important though it might be for many years. Agricultural supplies were one of the mainstays of the Russian contract—so much so that Warre and Vavasour had claimed that one of the reasons why the Company had fostered American immigrants had been to get their corn for sale to the Russians. Simpson secured a rebuttal of the assertion; but he wanted agricultural development on Vancouver Island, and Douglas and the Committee of Management encouraged retired servants to take plots of twenty acres each there.

For the British government the lessons of Oregon were clear and very recent—'It is obvious, when an eligible territory is left to be waste, unsubdued to the use of man, it is impossible to prevent persons from taking irregular possession of the land'. The territories ascribed to Britain in the Oregon Treaty must be settled or they would be lost; but both the Prime Minister and the Colonial

Secretary, Grey, were convinced that the British government could not afford the cost of settlement. Grey was devoted to the ideas of responsible government, but also to the spread of British settlement in North America, and to the concept of an Intercolonial Railway Line which would link the Maritime Provinces with Canada, would help in the colonisation of the prairies, and perhaps one day would help to produce a federal union. He was by no means an idle or indifferent Colonial Secretary; on the contrary, he was accused of having far too much energy and far too many enthusiasms. In terms of political partisanship he was not a member of the group of Colonial Reformers led by Wakefield, Buller and Molesworth, and indeed they attacked most aspects of his policy. But he was by temperament and conviction a reformer, and he was deeply committed to the Empire.

In a way, Grey had the task of creating a new theory of Empire and of inaugurating a new epoch by putting his theory into practice. For the repeal of the Corn Laws, soon followed by the repeal of the Navigation Acts, had ended the system of economic preferences which had hitherto bound the parts of the Empire to the metropolis. The United Kingdom would remain a magnificent market for colonial produce; the colonies would remain a splendid field for investment, enterprise and emigration; but commercial imperialism in its old sense, framed by statute and enforced by tolls and tariffs, was dead even beyond the possibility of resurrection by talk of an Imperial Zollverein (in which Grey also joined). A new thesis was needed, especially since Canada saw the abolition of her preferences as a sign of indifference to her interests. Gladstone had set out the arguments for an enduring connection 'founded upon a larger and firmer basis—upon protection rendered from one side and allegiance freely and loyally returned from the other—upon resemblances in origin, in laws, and in manners—in what inwardly binds men and communities of men together, as well as in the close association of those material interests which, as Her Majesty's Government are convinced, are destined not to recede but to advance, not to be severed but to be more healthfully combined under the quickening influences of increased commercial freedom'. The new fundamental principle was to be political freedom, to replace economic restraint, and it was to rest upon a common heritage of laws, institutions and experience—in effect upon emigration from Great Britain.

Any Colonial Secretary must in any case have included schemes for emigration in his policy in the years of the famine and the great exodus, and on this subject Grey had plenty of ideas, of which the

principal derived from the main contention of the Colonial Reformers—that the proper use of waste lands lay at the heart of the matter. On land use Grey had views which differed from those of the Colonial Reformers, and about which he was himself neither very convinced nor very logical. The ideas to which he reverted embodied the use of privileged Land Companies, to which vast grants of waste land would be made and which would be under contract to recruit and transport emigrants, to set them to work for wages on arrival and to grant them land after an initial period. He had a strong desire to see integrated villages set up, but that was by the way; the village system would, however, detract from the chances of profit which a Land Company would expect and so introduced something of an illogical element into Grey's approach. For unless government itself should undertake the organisation, it must be an Emigration Company or a Land Company, with hopes of profit, which must do it. Apart from expense, there were many arguments for leaving the matter to private enterprise in a *laissez-faire* period; government should repress frauds and prevent abuses, should clear the channels in which emigration flowed, and should leave the actual process to the voluntary methods which had taken 687,000 people to North America (284,000 to Canada) within ten years. The moment that government began to supply the means for emigration, individual exertion would be paralysed and the whole character of the movement would change. 'The most infirm, or the least industrious, are those whom their neighbours at home would be the most glad to put forward to emigrate, when the Funds were forthcoming'. This was a view which the *laissez-faire* free trader in Grey thoroughly endorsed, and Land Companies seemed the only means to his hand.

For Grey, of course, Vancouver Island and British Columbia were minor and distant problems. He had the Cape, Australia, New Zealand, the Maritime Provinces and Canada to people, and the West Indies to provide with a labour force in lieu of slavery, at a time when free trade was like to ruin the sugar colonies. For Canada, he discovered, he already had in existence the Canada Company for Upper Canada, the British American Company for Lower Canada, the New Brunswick Company, and the North American Association to develop the vast estate at Beauharnois which Edward Ellice and his partners had conveyed to it. These were Land Companies, but Grey had little doubt that he could easily turn them into Emigration Companies by advancing to them, against the security of their lands, the money for organising emigration. It was therefore not at all surprising that when Grey turned to the territories left by the

Oregon Treaty he should have noted that settlement by British subjects was necessary to stem 'the encroaching spirit of the United States', and that 'such settlement could only be advantageously effected under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company, which I am therefore disposed to encourage'.

The Company could not in any case be ignored, for any immigrant would have to reckon with the Licence for Exclusive Trade, which was not due to expire until 1859. The first move came from the Company, for while the treaty (it was hoped) had recognised the Company's rights to lands south of the boundary, the territories north of 49° had now become Crown Lands and it was essential that the Company's claims to Victoria and other lands should receive a proper title from the Crown. Grey told the Company to make sure that, legally, they could hold a title to such lands in their corporate capacity, and asked for a more specific definition of the lands which they wanted. The Company wasted little time on the legal point but merely referred to the fact that the recent treaty had acknowledged its power to hold title to lands; it rang the true note for Grey's ears when it urged the immediate colonisation of Vancouver Island. Pelly was in personal contact with Grey at this time (September-October 1846) but the Colonial Secretary gave no decision. He said he would consider a grant of land in Vancouver Island or elsewhere, he asked for certainty on the legal problem, and he asked the Company to formulate a firm proposal for colonisation.

The Company therefore asked that the Law Officers of the Crown be asked whether the Charter allowed it to hold land outside of Rupert's Land, and in reply to Grey's enquiry as to what lands would be required it volunteered to accept all the territory to the north and west of Rupert's Land 'if Her Majesty's Minister should be of opinion that the territory in question would be more conveniently governed and Colonized (as far as that may be practicable) through the Hudson's Bay Company'. So direct and comprehensive a proposal could hardly be acceptable, if only for the reason that, Grey's interest being in settlement, the problem could for the moment safely be confined to the neighbourhood of the American frontier. Further north the country seemed unattractive, and the chances of settlement remote. Accordingly by April 1847 the Company was ordering the Puget's Sound Company's cattle and stock to be removed from the mainland and was asking for an official survey of the whole of Vancouver Island while emphasising that the southern end of the island, at least, was known to be favourable for agriculture and for settlement.

Such negotiations between the Company and the Colonial Office did not pass without comment. Other offers were made, in particular a proposal that a new company should be formed to exploit the coal which had been discovered at Nanaimo, and to subsidize emigration from the profits of the coal trade. But talk of coal was mostly imagination; the Company certainly knew that coal could be got, but the *Beaver's* engineers had reported that it would not serve as steam coal, and the chief protagonist of the coal company approach, J. E. FitzGerald, had no practical knowledge. In any case, Pelly discussed the counter-proposition with FitzGerald and worked in consultation with the Colonial Office in formulating proposals for colonising the lands north of 49°. 'Mr. Over-Secretary' Stephen had retired from his post at the Colonial Office (to become Professor of History at Cambridge!) and had been succeeded by Herman Merivale, who brought to his office a great enthusiasm for land settlement and for the 'one tract which seems to invite colonization; that which extends along the Pacific, in the neighbourhood of the Columbia river'.

Pelly had much in common with Merivale, and after going over the problem and rejecting the coal-mining proposal he recapitulated the Company's willingness to take over the whole British territory north of 49°, but said he would accept Vancouver Island only. He was willing to agree that all revenue from coal or from sales of land should go into a development fund, but he insisted that 'if the grant is to be clogged up with any payment to the Mother Country the Hudson's Bay Company would be under the necessity of declining it'. Pelly pointed out that under its Charter the Company could appoint Governors and Councils and so could administer the territory without any complicated enabling act. While he was willing to devote all revenue to the furtherance of colonisation, he was aware that 'in a nutshell' he was asking that the rights exercised over Rupert's Land under the Charter should be extended to the whole of British North America except Canada.

This was something far different from a retreat of the fur trade in face of settlement—unless of course the Company seriously proposed to take on the role of an Emigration Company. It is not to be wondered at that Grey thought the project should be confined to Vancouver Island, at least in the first instance. Even when Merivale, on behalf of Grey, had accepted the Company's draft proposals the result was by no means certain. To silence objections, Grey thought there should be formal agreement that the Company would sell land on the island on reasonable terms and that the money from land sales

and from coal and other mines should go to a colonisation and improvement fund. Ten per cent. was to be allowed to the Company for interest on the capital involved and to compensate for the risks entailed. But, having brought the draft into line with his notions about land development, Grey then put forward a highly doctrinaire blueprint which would bring the non-existent colony into line with his notions of representative government. The legislative machinery was to be analogous to the assemblies of the early days of our colonial history; the Governor was to be appointed by royal commission (though Grey agreed that he would be largely directed, in making the appointment, by the Company) and he would call an elected assembly to exercise the legislative function in conjunction with his Council.

Pelly must have had his tongue in his cheek in accepting such terms, for there seemed little prospect of settlement taking place. At this time Elgin as Governor-General of Canada was sceptical of the chance of emigrants resisting the attractions of the United States, for he reckoned that even if he had to pay for his land in the States the emigrant could still set himself up on a farm there at a less expenditure than he would have to pay in Canada if he got his land free. Grey's object was to place the Company under a legal obligation to found a colony. But it was not to be expected that such a proposal would pass easily through the House of Commons. Gladstone and the Tories were able to point out that at this time the settlers at Red River were challenging the Company's authority and were accusing it of a deep hostility to colonisation, and the debates were long and fierce. In the end Grey's Bill was saved from a hostile vote by a majority of seventy-six to fifty-eight, and in early September 1848 the Company agreed that it 'entered fully into' Grey's views on the colonisation of Vancouver Island, and a General Court of the Company accepted the grant of the island for the purpose of colonisation.

James Douglas was forthwith ordered to select a site for a farm and for a settlement on which the operations of the Puget's Sound Company might be continued, and he was told to reserve a large block of land—ten square miles were suggested—for that company. In the midst of his pre-occupation with attempts to sell the possessory rights south of 49° to the American government, Pelly thought that the colonisation of Vancouver Island would take precedence; and the Company's titles were to be set out before other claimants arrived—in fact even before the Bill was through Parliament.

The island was formally granted to the Company on 13th

January, 1849. The chief counter-arguments had been drawn from the Company's history as a patron, or opponent, of colonisation at Red River; but there was an equally strong case to be made that the Company and Selkirk between them were entirely responsible for the very existence of the colony there, however much the present generation of settlers might resent the Company's rules. The other major point in discussion rose from the proposal that land on the island should be sold at a pound an acre. It seemed foolish to hope for many settlers when Oregon was offering similar land at a dollar an acre, but the security of a British title and of British rule were held out as attractions, and the proposal fitted well with the ideas of the Colonial Reformers in that the revenue from land sales (less ten per cent. for administration and for interest) was to go to a development fund. It would not be the Company which would profit from this price, but the colony. So the Company received the grant—in perpetuity so as to promise security and stability, but yet subject to revocation at the end of the current Licence for Exclusive Trade in 1859, or at the end of five years if no settlements were effected.

Forthwith the Company accepted the implications of the grant. Freehold land was to be sold to British immigrants at a pound an acre, but they were not to be allowed to buy plots of less than twenty acres; a certain minimum of solvency was to be insisted on! The immigrants, too, were either to pay their own passages or they were to pay the Company for shipping them, and for every farm of a hundred acres which any settler took up he was to bring out to the island either five single men or three married couples to work the land. Since it was known that coal was there, and since gold was in the air in 1849, it was decided that the mineral rights should be vested in the Company, but owners of the surface soil should be compensated for disturbance caused by the working of minerals and they should be allowed to mine coal on payment of a royalty to the Company. Reserves of land—an eighth as it came to be sold—were to be set aside for religious purposes, and the Governor and Council of the island were to hold such lands in trust. An equal reservation was to be set aside to pay the costs of schools, roads and public works development.

This was a doctrinaire *pro forma* for colonial development; but it had been put through a highly critical Parliament, and there can have been no doubt in anyone's mind that, making all allowances for the dogmatic convictions of the Colonial Secretary with his insistence on elected assemblies, and for the tendencious clauses on land-sales and immigration, the object in view was the establishment of a

colony, not the prolongation of the fur trade. This was made the more clear when the first Governor of the island was appointed. In the course of negotiations Governor Pelly had suggested to the Colonial Secretary that, since it must be many years before the colony could afford to pay a suitable salary to its Governor, James Douglas should be appointed. He was put forward as a man of property, and of knowledge and vision. His report on the island had been presented to Parliament, and as a Chief Factor in the Company he was assured of an independent livelihood. The arrangement at first, in September 1848, was accepted as a temporary expedient, but the dangers of such a procedure were quickly appreciated, and the choice fell upon Richard Blanshard.

How Blanshard came into the picture is not quite clear. He was a lawyer, he had behind him some experience of administration in British Honduras, and he was somehow sufficiently well known to the Committee of the Company for them to put his name forward in June 1849. Though Grey could see the danger of appointing a Governor whose living depended on the Company and on the fur trade, he was aware that the whole project depended upon the Company, and since the Governor should be restrained by an elected Assembly he could see no danger in allowing the Company to select him. Accepting the Company's nominee made it easy, too, for the Colonial Office to make it clear that the Governor of the island would have no claim upon the British government for his salary or for his passage out, and that he would be entirely dependent upon the Company. To this the Company agreed, though it boggled at having to pay a fee for the Governor's commission of office to be put through the official channels.

Governor Blanshard arrived on Vancouver Island on 10th March, 1850; on 18th November, 1851, he resigned his office and left the island for good. He stated that his private fortune was inadequate for the cost of living since the Company ran up prices, and he further accused the Company of allocating the best lands to itself and to the Puget's Sound Company in 'reserves', while good arable land was in any case limited in extent, there were no settlers save former employees of the Company, and the small band of miners who had been brought in to work the coal were quite disgruntled and were getting no coal. The Company was able without much trouble to show that Blanshard had only himself to thank for many of his expenses and troubles, for although he had been offered a passage out to Vancouver Island on the Company's ships he had decided to go overland via the Chagres peninsula and had then missed his ship at

Darien and been forced to complete his journey in H.M.S. *Driver*; moreover the prices which he had been charged for provisions had been those which the Company had been forced to pay on the mainland in Oregon and had not been 'run up' by the Company, and the policy of providing a rural police force by settling the Company's retired servants on twenty-acre plots in the so-called reserves was necessary if order was to be preserved, and more sensible than the employment of troops.

The root of the matter was that Blanshard had found nothing but the Company and its servants in Vancouver Island, and he had not fallen in with their ways. By 1851 the only real sale of land had been to Captain Walter Colquhoun Grant, a retired army officer who had reached the island in August 1849. Grant had arranged for eight labourers to be sent by way of Cape Horn, to work the land which he would take up. Himself he came by way of Panama, and Douglas reported that he arrived destitute of funds and had to be given advances of cattle and seed-corn by the Company, on which he was dependent for his daily bread. Blanshard was not concerned with these aspects of Grant's settlement; what seemed to him ominous was that the Company had refused a concession of land near to Victoria, declaring that it was all already appropriated, and so Grant had gone thirty miles further north, and had made it necessary for the Governor to provide protection, for which he had asked for troops. To this the Company replied that the choice was Grant's own; even so, the Company had always found it possible to manage the Indians, there was no need for troops, and the Company did not know where money to pay them would come from. In 1851, in any case, Grant had gone off to try his fortunes in California, assigning his lands to the Company to cover its advances to him and leaving one of his labourers in charge. He returned to find his holding ruined, and to sell it for what he could get.

Grant's case, the case of a speculator, was not one to arouse great sympathy, and the Company had its answer ready. But it was disconcerting to learn that although there was as yet virtually no settlement the choicer lands had already been allotted. For this the reason lay in the so-called Fur Trade Reserve, and Blanshard reported that the Company had allotted to itself about thirty square miles of land for which it did not intend to pay. He ran the Puget's Sound Company and the Hudson's Bay Company together in this, and declared that the Puget's Sound Company had no real existence and was only the Hudson's Bay Company under another name, and he declared that the Hudson's Bay Company claimed and was surveying a lot of

land from Victoria Harbour north to Cedar Hill or Mount Douglas and then east to the Canal de Arro, an area of about ten square miles, while the adjoining tract which included Esquimalt Harbour was ascribed to the Puget's Sound Company.

It was easy for Pelly to correct the error by pointing out that although its shares were indeed held by 'persons more or less connected with the Hudson's Bay Company' the Puget's Sound Company was a distinct and separate association. But between Douglas and the Governor and Committee there was enough difference to warrant Blanshard's report and government's suspicion. Pelly instructed Douglas (in January 1851) that the land occupied by the fur trade on the island must be accurately marked out. It would count as a possessory right secured during the period of joint occupation with the United States before the boundary was settled, and would be the property of the Company in the same way as the possessory rights which had been secured south of the boundary. But for any land claimed by the Company since the treaty the Company would have to pay a pound an acre into the colony's development fund just the same as anyone else. Douglas pointed out that when he had first chosen the site for Victoria the extreme boundaries had amounted to about twenty square miles. Of this, however, only about two square miles were under tillage, a further four square miles were under pasture for the cattle, and the remainder were not marked out. He asked how much he should claim for the fur trade, the whole twenty square miles or only the six which had been marked out? When the answer came it was clear and adequate; Douglas was told that the utmost extent which the fur trade would be conceded without payment was the six square miles which were actually occupied before the treaty had been signed. This was a view which Pelly put to the Colonial Office and, explaining that the Company must pay the standard price for any additions since the treaty, Grey accepted the claim and asked for the boundaries, so stated, to be declared.

Victoria, despite criticism and the distance of fresh water from the post, was well established as an entrepot, and the farm attached to the post was producing good wheat, potatoes, meat and fruit. Three hundred and fifty acres were under the plough there by 1848, and the fur trade reserve, even when closely defined, included all the water-front and adjacent areas. Various lots in the reserve had been sold off to retired fur-traders, and during 1850 Douglas had been instructed to lay out four thousand pounds for the purposes of the colony—to which Blanshard replied that apart from payments to Indians to secure titles to lands (a little over \$2,000) this money was

entirely allocated to public works near to the reserve, an allocation which crippled settlement further afield. The money was in fact set against claims to land, at a pound an acre, in and near Victoria, and the Company was prepared to advance the money pending a survey and the establishment of an accurate title. But Douglas restricted the sum to £2,000, which he said would be adequate. He was planning a coastal road which would link up Victoria and the Company's other claims, and there was obvious ground for suspicion.

But as Douglas set to work to plan Victoria's layout as a city, in 1852, the way in which the unoccupied and unsurveyed portion of the large fur-trade reserve was thrown upon the market brought many demands for land. He wisely thought it best to delay as much as possible until a surveyor had arrived and the claims could be properly set out, though he granted twenty acres to the first claimant, Elisha Chancellor, an Englishman who had resided in the United States for many years, on condition that he brought the land into cultivation and lived there. The need for accurate survey was revealed when Douglas claimed that Blanshard's own house was built on land which belonged to the fur-trade reserve, and as soon as Surveyor Pemberton arrived on the island, in June 1851, he was set to work to survey the Victoria district.

In the meantime Douglas had about a hundred Indians at work in clearing land and bringing it under cultivation at a contract rate per acre. This in itself is sign enough of the way in which the Company never reckoned much on the fur returns of Vancouver Island, for Indians inured to agricultural or coal-mining labour were lost to the fur trade. The Company's own labour force consisted of sixty-one men, some of whom were employed in breaking ground but who, for the most part, were engaged in building at Esquimalt Bay, Cadboro Bay and at Victoria itself, partly for the Hudson's Bay Company, and partly for the Puget's Sound Company. The latter company had done something to fulfil the duty of active colonisation, probably as much as the circumstances warranted. For in 1850 it had sent out two bailiffs and seventy-four farm labourers, and then a further party of twenty-two labourers. The labourers were promised a grant of twenty acres of land when they had fulfilled their contract of five years; in the meantime they were paid wages, were taken out on the Company's ships and then transferred to the Puget's Sound Company, and they were bound to work for the bailiffs, who were on a salary-and-share-of-profits arrangement. The bailiffs, however, were to remain bailiffs, and when at the end of fifteen years the farms were assessed they were to get a share of the profits but were not to

become proprietors. So the Puget's Sound scheme for bailiff farming, though it certainly took out agriculturists, appeared as part of a proprietary development rather than as a colonisation scheme, and the land was part of the large reservation round Esquimalt Bay which that company claimed, with the option of buying the land as required. The scheme did not satisfy the critics, and it did not reward the Company either, for with four such bailiff-farms on hand the Company found that the bailiffs ran into debt, muddled their accounts and with one exception failed, while the labourers often drifted off to California and the hope of a fortune.

Blanshard said that by the time he left the island there were not above thirty *bona fide* settlers; but he refused to distinguish between the Hudson's Bay and the Puget's Sound Companies and held that all their immigrants alike were ascribed to the Hudson's Bay Company—as indeed they were until they landed, since as servants of the Company they could be shipped out with the general cargoes, including gunpowder; otherwise, as employees of the Puget's Sound Company, they would have to travel as passengers by some other route. Still by 1852 only eleven men had bought land; but only a further nineteen had even made application. The price of land, set against the grants of Oregon, was held to be the principal deterrent, and to be the result of a determination by the Company to prevent settlement. This, however, was a dogmatic point in the theory of the economics of colonisation upon which the Colonial Office had pinned its faith, not a subterfuge inserted by the Company. Yet, even allowing the bailiffs and the indentured labourers of the Puget's Sound Company to be colonists, it was reckoned that only four hundred and thirty-five had been sent out by 1852.

Not all of these were agriculturalists. In fact the first important immigration consisted of some eighty miners who arrived in March 1850 to work the coal mine at Fort Rupert, where there were hopes of a good workable seam. But the coal would only repay casual surface work by Indians; the Company had such small stocks on hand that it could not undertake to supply shipping, and the mining community under the leadership and lax control of McNeill was a difficult and dissatisfied element in the island's population—an element with which James Douglas thought that Governor Blanshard ought not to consort. It was to the mining community that deserting seamen turned, and in 1850 three such men absconded from their ships and made for Fort Rupert. Ill-prepared and quite defenceless, they were taken by Indians and were murdered. Blanshard attributed the murders to the knowledge that the Company had published a prom-

ise of a reward for their return, alive or dead; he secured H.M.S. *Daedalus* for a punitive expedition, and the murders were punished by the burning of an Indian village, after which the Indians themselves executed the murderers and delivered the corpses at Fort Rupert. The affair led Grey to conclude that some more effective protection than chance visits by warships was needed, and he asked the Company for its plans. Andrew Colvile, no friend of colonisation and acting as Governor during Pelly's illness, took the chance to retort that the Company had never found any difficulty in protecting the servants and property of the Company; it was when settlers arrived that trouble began. Temperate and prudent conduct had always proved all that was needed.

But Grey was right; settlement and colonists entailed more governmental responsibilities than did the administration of the fur trade. The miners at Fort Rupert were in a state of mutiny, work had completely stopped, they had demanded double pay, many had deserted to California, there were only about seven hundred tons of coal in the yard, brought in by Indians, and the only thing which kept the men on the spot was the knowledge that they would be massacred if they left Fort Rupert and straggled along the coast. Douglas sent a ganger and twelve loyal men to restore order and to hold the men to their contracts, and he soon shifted them from Fort Rupert to Nanaimo, where a better seam, superior in quality to the best Scotch coal, was reported. It was 1852 before the main seam at Nanaimo was opened, but the miners had brought to a head some of the problems of governance. Blanshard (whose account of the murders described the men as absconding miners, not seamen, reported the so-called colony as being 'nothing more than a fur-trading post', and he said that as Governor he had very little to do except to act as an ordinary magistrate in settling disputes between the Company's officers and servants. But although the disputes were so domestic, he thought it necessary that more care should be taken for legal matters—'that there should be some kind of law on the island, and to enforce it'. The obvious thing would have been to confer magistracies upon the Company's officers, but Blanshard was afraid they would abuse their judicial powers, and he appointed as the first magistrate the newly arrived medical officer at Fort Rupert, J. S. Helmcken, on the ground that he was a stranger to the brawls and feuds which led to almost all of the litigation. Helmcken was an admirable choice, but he soon resigned, for he found that the miners expected him to come between them and the Company's officers, and as an employee of the Company he found his position impossible.

It says much for Blanshard's realism, and for his desire to establish constitutional machinery which would one day broaden out in independent action, that on his departure he set up a Council to rule the island, consisting of Douglas, John Tod who was one of the Company's Committee of Management for the Columbia, and James Cooper. Of the three, Cooper was the only one who could in any sense be considered as independent of the Company, and even he might well rank as one of the former employees who had been granted land, for he had formerly been one of the Company's ship's captains. Cooper, however, had gone to the island in 1851 to settle 'decidedly independent, on my own account'. He was an active critic of the Company, he had bought his farm of three hundred acres (but had not managed to pay for it) at the full price and considered it as 'decidedly my own property'. He was prosperous, having opened a retail liquor store in Victoria (for which he had to pay a heavy licence and was under penalty not to sell spirits to Indians). Such as it was, the Council left by Blanshard was an attempt to set up the first organs of responsible government on the island.

Yet when Blanshard had gone the original arguments still carried the day, as they had during the Parliamentary debate. The British government would not underwrite the cost of colonising the island, and its remoteness and the costs of the voyage made it impossible for any speculative Land Company to undertake the business. No offer to do the work had come from any body of men who had the financial stability to make their offer worth consideration. So although Blanshard's resignation and his charges against the Company must have raised grave doubts, the Colonial Office again asked the Company for the nomination of a successor. James Douglas had been appointed the Senior Member of his Council by Governor Blanshard during his short and uneasy tenure of office, and although he protested that the post gave him anything but pleasure, and would certainly involve him in extra expenses, he was once more nominated by the Company, and accepted the Governorship in August 1851.

Douglas's interests were, at this stage, unmistakably those of the Company, of the fur trade, and of Victoria as a port and depot, rather than the broader aspects of settling the whole island. The basic fact was that no-one but the Company would undertake the commitment. Then came the consideration that large numbers (it was estimated at two thousand men) were leaving Oregon for the California gold fields, but that even so Oregon proved more attrac-

tive to emigrants than Vancouver Island. Both wages and prices were higher in Oregon, and emigrants were put off by the dreary and deserted aspect of much of the coast of Vancouver Island; it was alleged that they would not stand the climate on the island and that free grants of land and the shipment of complete prefabricated frame houses from the States added vastly to the attractions of the mainland. Moreover, although the Colonial Office stressed that only the land had been granted to the Company and that as a colony it would be entirely under the British government, this meant little to the immigrants and even the prospect that rapid development in California would offer a market for the coal of Vancouver Island was negated by the realisation that the kind of artisans who would be required would not accept what they considered the Company's rule.

The Company's rule was essential; but it was not attractive, and before he left the island Blanshard had been presented with a petition signed by fifteen men. In due course he put it to the Colonial Office, for it was to express the 'unfeigned surprise and deep concern' of the memorialists at the report of Douglas's appointment. They considered themselves as representing the island as a colony since they included all the 'independent settlers' and all the other inhabitants were connected in some way or other with the Company, and they thought it quite impossible that a Governor who was tied to the Company and to the fur trade should hold the balance level between the interests of the colony and those of the Company. Most political developments, almost all judicial cases, and even the collection and expenditure of revenue, seemed certain to bring Company and colony into conflict. Six of the fifteen independent settlers were from the mining family of Muirs, one was Robert Staines the Company's Chaplain, and one was James Cooper, which left a small enough handful to voice the feelings of the colonists.

But Douglas himself was almost of the settlers' opinion, for he had written to Simpson about Blanshard that 'nothing disagreeable, of a private nature ever occurred to disturb our harmony. True it is we differ in opinion as to public matters—as for example he is anxious to have a military force stationed on the island—which is unquestionably a proper measure, but as an agent of the Company who would have to maintain that force I have endeavoured to show that there was no positive necessity for it. Again he is opposed to the large reserves of land made for the Companies which he, with justice, opposes as injurious to the country, while I am in duty bound to maintain their rights. It is not as a private individual but as a servant of the Company that there has ever been a difference of opinion'.

Here Douglas was expressing the conflict of interests which he accepted, together with the complete loyalty to the Company which seemed to make him so dangerous as a Governor. Later in his career that loyalty no longer bound him. But in 1851 he had shewn that he could see the colony's interests as distinct from those of the Company and that, as the Company's Chief Factor and as agent for the Puget's Sound Company, he thought it his duty to forward the Companies' claims. The cynical Ogden plainly foresaw a clash of interests in the management of the three different concerns.

Already before Douglas entered upon office as Governor, therefore, it was strongly felt that the two years' experience of Blanshard had proved that Gladstone had been justified in calling the Company an anti-colonising company, and although the *Tory* arrived in May 1851 with more emigrants and servants for the Puget's Sound Company this did nothing to alter the situation. Very little had been done in the way of settlement, and that under the tight control of the Company; the few offices which had been set up were almost entirely in the hands of the Company's employees and dependants, and there was no reason to believe that the Company would try to alter things.

Up to 1858 James Douglas justified the fears of those who had opposed his appointment. He knew the whole situation, and he was a man of the greatest competence and fairness of mind. But his period of office raised yet once more the old doubts about the Company's intentions, and Douglas foresaw this, for on learning of his appointment he recorded his lack of enthusiasm—'I am again appointed Governor *pro tempore*, this is too much of a good thing. I am getting tired of Vancouver's Island'.

To relations with the Indians Douglas brought the knowledge and the sureness of touch which he had acquired in the fur trade. In a series of treaties he secured from the tribes the titles to the lands required for settlement, and by not insisting too literally upon European standards of justice and punishment he maintained a growing respect for life and property. This was an attitude which later brought an accusation that his policy towards the Indians was probably humane but was certainly injudicious, since on many occasions it meant that when an Indian committed an offence either he or his chief was bribed by blankets or other gifts to keep them in good humour. There was no effective force to impose punishment, but the resultant good relations compared very favourably with the wars on the American side of the border. Yet it was urged that the easy touch was more appropriate to a fur post than to a settlement of

British subjects. On occasions, however, Douglas acted with force and purpose, as when he faced the Cowichan tribe after two of its members had murdered the shepherd Peter Brown. He held his fire and prevented a massacre when the tribe came at him whooping and drumming, and he persuaded them to hand over the two murderers, whom he then tried and executed.

Care for the internal stability of the colony was equally stamped with the fur-trading mark, and this was hardly to be wondered at, still less to be blamed; for the colony as it stood was in fact little more than a parasite upon the fur trade. The small Council which Blanshard had appointed was enlarged by the nomination of Chief Factors Roderick Finlayson and John Work in 1852, by Douglas's brother-in-law David Cameron in 1853, and then in 1858 by Donald Fraser and the settler Alfred Langley. The powers of the Council, even when so enlarged, were by no means clear, but so-called 'laws' were nevertheless passed to prevent the sale or gift of spirits to Indians, to keep Victoria as a free port by imposing no customs duties, and to regulate the relations of masters and servants.

The island flourished with Douglas, as Governor, as the only executive officer; by 1853 Victoria contained eighty-seven dwelling houses and store houses and many other buildings, a school house was built and a church for three hundred was under construction, a school-master was in residence and had thirty-six pupils, and there was an active community of over a hundred men there. In May 1851 a qualified surveyor had arrived at Victoria, Joseph Despard Pemberton, engaged by the Hudson's Bay Company. Pemberton's instructions had ordered him to start work on the district round Victoria and to the west; but 'the main object for which these surveys are undertaken is the Colonisation of the Island'. Pemberton made a preliminary survey of the coast eastwards from Victoria and then turned to the fur-trade reserve, on which the Company proposed to sell off town lots at prices which were not tied to the standard level of a pound an acre for agricultural land. Douglas reported many demands for such land, and the reserve was surveyed and its title registered to the Company by April 1853, by which time Pemberton had also turned his attention to Esquimalt Harbour and Sooke Harbour, and had followed up a journey with Douglas to Nanaimo (Wentuhuysen Inlet) and had mapped out the very promising coal seam there.

Douglas was most enthusiastic about the Nanaimo coal; he thought the island there was one vast coalfield, and he transferred the Fort Rupert miners there. He also secured the property for the

Company, for he was uncertain about the reserve and about the right of mineral royalties, and as the mining was being started he had with him the Honourable Charles Fitzwilliam, Member of Parliament and a severe critic of the Company. So Douglas made certain by 'buying' six thousand acres at Nanaimo for the Company, a move which caused severe criticism from his colleagues in the fur trade.

But although Douglas was able to develop a profitable industry at Nanaimo, he was able to do little about gold discoveries—not even to exercise adequate control. As early as 18th June, 1850, Blanshard had reported that men from Oregon were flocking to a gold-strike which had been reported on Spokane River. He feared that the Company's servants would desert Vancouver Island in the same way, and though Douglas wrote that the rumour of gold seventy miles from Fort Colville was not dependable he also had to report that one of the Company's ships, the *Mary Dare* was held in harbour because her crew had deserted and later, in September, that the *Norman Morison* was bringing home over four thousand ounces of gold. Then the Spokane River strike was lost sight of as news came that Indians had discovered gold on 'Queen Charlotte Island'. Chief Factor John Work was sent to the site and came back with two large nuggets, and with some auriferous quartz, and he reported that the Indians were ready to sell their lands.

The ships in Victoria harbour found it quite impossible to hold their crews as the rumours spread, and in 1851 an expedition was properly organised in which the men were supplied with kit on a half-share basis. A French-Canadian, Pierre Legace, whom Work sent up, failed to reach the gold district but he established that the 'island' was in fact a group of several islands, and Douglas followed up the half-shares expedition with a group of thirty-three men on the *Recovery*. These were on full pay under Chief Trader Kennedy, and they would get no share of any gold. The half-shares party of miners got into fights with the Indians, and though Kennedy found gold it was not in sufficient quantities and his expedition was accounted very unproductive; but he took possession for the Company of the area of Gold Harbour without opposition from the Indians. In the meantime an American schooner, the *Exact*, with thirty-two gold-seekers aboard, had called at Victoria *en route* for Queen Charlotte Islands in November 1851. Douglas could do nothing about them, for they had the same rights as anyone else, but the *Exact* was back at Victoria in March 1852; her crew thought there was plenty of gold to be got, but the Indians had refused to let them work it and they reckoned a party would need to be at least a hundred strong to

be successful. Indian opposition had saved the day for the British, for although the Company later claimed priority, in 1853, when a company from San Francisco sought a permit to develop the gold of Queen Charlotte Islands, nothing had been effected—a failure which Douglas ascribed to the intractable dispositions of the English servants of the Company who would not go north from Victoria without compulsion.

The gold failure was but one sign that the Company was in no position to expand—its critics said that it did not wish to expand—the bases of society on Vancouver Island; and the position did not pass without comment. The ‘free settlers’, led by the Reverend Robert Staines, Cooper, and the head of the Muir family, followed up their petition to Governor Blanshard with a series of letters to newspapers in Oregon. They pointed out that the colony was not increasing and that the cause was the high price of land; all should have free grants, as in Oregon. Minor complaints were over the scarcity of beef, mutton and vegetables, the lack of water in the summer season. They claimed that the grant to the Company should be revoked, and the island placed directly under government control. But free land was the burden of their complaint.

The same opinions were voiced by Rear Admiral Moresby, and coming from so distinguished a source they found audience in high political circles. As there seemed to be some chance that Americans might stake a claim, the Colonial Office had suggested that since Her Majesty’s Government could not undertake colonisation on Queen Charlotte Islands, Douglas might be given yet one more commission, as Lieutenant-Governor of the islands. This would give him some ostensible authority but would confer no real power; so Rear Admiral Moresby sent the *Thetis* man-of-war to the islands, to maintain order and to assert the British title. But Moresby was in no mood to make good what he considered the defects of Company rule. He sent in a damning report, which was in due course sent to the Company for comment. For the most part Moresby’s criticism followed the same lines as the ‘free settlers’, but he had the particular grievance that the goods and provisions which he had to buy at the Company’s store at Victoria were charged to the navy at the Company’s full price, which he thought exorbitant and monopolistic, and he saw most of the difficulties as arising from the discontent of the Company’s servants, who seemed to him underfed, underpaid, overcharged and harshly ruled. He alleged that the servants detested their subjection as a tyranny and that they deserted constantly. All of this the Company denied, even the monopoly of trade, for it never

refused ship-space to a trader except for spirits; many of the troubles and all the high prices were due to the success of the gold rush in California.

In its way this was a fair enough rebuttal. But the Company's store had an effective monopoly of such trade as there was on Vancouver Island, and as if the agricultural price of a pound an acre were not enough of a grievance the town lots at Victoria on the newly surveyed fur trade reserve were being offered at as much as a hundred dollars a lot. The Company's first formal report to the Colonial Office on its stewardship, in accordance with the terms on which the island had been granted, did nothing to allay criticism, and in 1853 Douglas forwarded home yet another petition from the 'free settlers' asking the Crown to revoke the grant. A similar petition was presented to the two Houses of Parliament in 1854, and though it was overshadowed by the Crimean War it roused Simpson's wrath and it roused Colonial Office suspicions. The Company's régime and Douglas's rule were called into question over two main issues, the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate and the imposition of customs dues—in both Douglas seems to have acted in a way in which a realistic acceptance of facts came very near to contempt for the feelings involved.

In 1852 the island was divided into five districts, and prominent settlers were appointed as stipendiary magistrates to four of them. Then Douglas appointed David Cameron Magistrate and Justice of the Peace for Victoria. This last appointment was virtually in replacement of himself but Cameron, like the other magistrates, knew no law, he was an employee of the Company, and he was Douglas's brother-in-law. His defects became more obvious when the limitations of the magistrates were revealed and the Council limited magistrates' jurisdiction to cases involving a hundred pounds or less, set up a Court of Common Pleas to deal with cases involving up to two thousand pounds, and appointed Cameron as judge with a salary of a hundred pounds a year. Cameron seems to have been no more ignorant of the law than the other magistrates, and probably he was more conscientious, for one of the grievances noted against him was that 'all the knowledge that he gains is from books; for instance, before he can decide upon a case, he has to refer to his books even in the most common case'.

But the circumstances of Cameron's appointment caused an uproar against Douglas. In civil cases there was every likelihood that the Company or its officers would be on one side and settlers, servants or customers, on the other. The handful of settlers wanted

knowledge of the law, and they wanted independence of the Company, in their judges. A petition against the appointment was immediately sent to Douglas and after a short interval Chaplain Staines left for England with a further petition to the Colonial Office. The outspoken clergyman was by now (1853) thoroughly obnoxious to the Company's officials; Douglas accused him of an 'unaccountable dislike' for the Company and of writing anonymous letters to the press, and before he left for England he figured in a strange affair which underlined the dangers of the judicial situation. Staines was accused of stealing pigs, and the accusation seemed to the other settlers to be a piece of harsh victimisation, especially as Cameron at first prepared to bring the case forward for trial without even empanelling a Grand Jury, only to find that there was not sufficient evidence.

Staines was drowned on his way to England with the petitions of the 'free settlers', but the charges of judicial partiality seemed to carry enough weight for the Colonial Office to send them out to Douglas for his rebuttal. He made a good case, explained the need for a Court of Common Pleas in terms which would appeal to the rather doctrinaire constitutionalism of Westminster, and commended Cameron for his integrity and fearlessness. He was also able to send home a protest, signed by almost all (fifty-four) of the landed proprietors of the island, against the statements of the 'free settlers' petition. Cameron was confirmed in his office by the Crown, but the incident must have revealed to the Colonial Office that the constitutional and administrative system was in danger of remaining on too narrow and exclusive a base.

'Legislation' (so-called) on economic matters in the meantime had caused something of a clash with government, for although it had been decided that the island's revenues should be got from land sales and from liquor licences (which paid Cameron's stipend as judge), in May 1853 Douglas set up a customs officer and decided that there should only be three ports of entry to the island, at Esquimalt, Victoria and Fort Rupert. After making their entry at these ports, ships might go to any port of the island inhabited by white men but not to places inhabited by Indians only. At the same time Douglas, with his Council, decided to impose duties and licences for the sale of spirits. This aroused opposition even in the Council, and the whole issue was referred to the Colonial Office. There the Earl of Lincoln, who had spoken against the Company at inordinate length in the debate of 1849, had become Colonial Secretary, as Duke of Newcastle, in a Liberal Government which included the other

principal opponent of the Company, Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It seemed that the sacred principles of Free Trade were being flouted at the same time as the Company was filching a monopoly of trade with the Indians, and Newcastle came forward with a proposal that freedom to trade with Indians should be acknowledged, including even furs, but subject to restraints upon the sale of spirits. The Deputy Governor Andrew Colvile (Pelly being ill) replied that since the island had become a colony the Company had neither claimed nor exercised an exclusive trade with the Indians, and it had set up no restrictions on trade with Indians or with settlers. This was of course true, and even the opponents of the Company admitted that the Company imposed no restrictions upon traders. But the Company refused to bring in freight for potential rivals in trade. Not unreasonably they objected to competition based upon their own goods, and their power was such that private individuals stood no chance of competition, for almost all of the 'settlers' received salaries from the Company and were unable to get money on the island. So they must either buy from the Company's store or go without, and although goods could be freely landed and the island enjoyed the great advantage of an absence of customs dues except for the small charge of tenpence a load on timber export, the Company enjoyed lack of competition even if it had no right of exclusive trade. By 1857 there were no merchants on the island.

Technically, also, the particular act which had challenged Newcastle's intervention was not an act of the Company but a piece of 'legislation' by Governor Douglas and his Council. The Colonial Office turned to take the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown on the powers of the Governor and Council to legislate, as also of the need to end the grant of the island to the Company. Newcastle left the Colonial Office in 1854, but the Company's second routine report on the island, delivered in January, 1855, brought no peace of mind to Sir George Grey, who was then in office. The Hudson's Bay Company had bought a further 6,200 acres and the Puget's Sound Company a further 2,574 since the previous report of 1852. These were very substantial portions of the total of 11,455 acres which had been sold since that date, and although there were forty-three 'settlers' by 1855 most of these were connected with the Company and the only noticeable increase in population was due to the Company sending out a further three hundred or so during the period, many of them on behalf of the Puget's Sound Company. Colvile maintained that, in the peculiar circumstances of Vancouver Island

and the Gold Rush, the Company had been 'tolerably successful' in founding a colony. But Sir George Grey began to wonder whether the Company might not voluntarily surrender the grant rather than await its termination and, perhaps, an enquiry. To this the Company's answer was that government might certainly resume the island if the Company could be repaid its expenses incurred for the promotion of settlement.

While this aspect of the problem was being investigated the whole situation was being probed by Henry Labouchere as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Taking his stand on the fact that Governor Blanshard's commission had instructed him to create an elective legislative assembly, based upon the votes of twenty-acre freeholders, he maintained that the later clause empowering the Governor to make laws by the advice of his Council alone was only meant to be temporary. So, while fully admitting the validity of the grounds upon which Douglas had acted, he told him that laws could only be made with the support of an elected legislature. Such a duly constituted body could, of course, surrender its powers to a single chamber, and Labouchere conceded that a nominated Council, an elected Legislative Assembly, and a Governor, might be too much for the island to carry. But first the Assembly must be convened.

Douglas was aghast at the labour involved for so little purpose; he was also 'utterly averse to universal suffrage, or making population the basis of representation'. But if the exercise had to be performed he was in favour of giving it some reality, and he suggested a wider franchise than twenty-acres freehold would give. Eventually he divided the island into four electoral districts for the election of seven members on the basis of a twenty-acre franchise for the vote and £300 property qualification for members. On this basis the electors were so few that the elections were mere nominations in three of the districts, though in Victoria the contest was 'stoutly maintained by no fewer than five rival candidates'. Still, when Douglas faced his first Assembly in August 1856 three of the seven elections were under dispute and with Helmcken chosen as Speaker there were hardly enough left for a Committee of Enquiry!

The beginnings of Parliamentary government in Vancouver Island were nevertheless sane and realistic—and Douglas's pompous opening address met the approval of the Colonial Office. He emphasised the need for prudence, temperance and justice, for good relations with the Indians and for living within the narrow resources of the island. The little colony set to work to embody its militia from fear that the Indian wars of the Americans might spread, and modest

allocations of revenue were made for a court-house, for roads and bridges, and for education. Great hopes were entertained that if the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States could be extended to Vancouver Island, lumber and corn might go duty-free into California. Simpson was strongly against including the whole of the Pacific Coast in such an arrangement since it would give the Americans that freedom of the coastal trade which he had striven for so long to deny them, but Douglas hoped that an exception might be made for his colony. The opportunity had been missed in 1854, and once more nothing was achieved in 1856. But something of a stimulus to the colony was given by the Company paying cash for the considerable areas which it had taken up, and Douglas also began a system whereby settlers were allowed to pay for their land on the instalment system. He reported that this had produced an active demand for land and was so attractive that he even hoped to attract a considerable body of Canadians who had gone to settle in California.

Significant, if small, beginnings had been made. But the Indian situation appeared ominous, especially when Indians (probably from British territory though Douglas later said he was convinced they were Russian) murdered the American customs collector on Whidbey Island. In the meantime the Company presented to a government which was scared of the costs of colonial commitments an account for £87,071 8s. 3d., to which were to be added a miscellany of small accounts and a bill for the ship *Otter*; it was due to the very small number of voluntary settlers that the bill for assisted voyages was so large. Everything seemed to cast doubt on the Company as an agent of colonisation, but Vancouver Island as a separate issue was swallowed up in the general issue of the renewal of the Company's Licence for Exclusive Trade in British Territories to the west and north-west of Rupert's Land which had been granted for twenty-one years in 1838.

As the time for renewal approached it was the Company which took the initiative. In December 1856 they reminded Labouchere that the grant would expire in 1859, and they claimed renewal on the ground of the peace they had maintained, the suppression of the trade in spirits, the moral and religious instruction which had been undertaken, and the attachment of the Indians to their régime. Labouchere replied that he intended to ask for a Select Committee of the House of Commons to report on the whole problem, and the Company then put in a formal request for renewal for a further twenty-one years, with power to abrogate at two years' notice. This, said the Company, was the minimum period; under any shorter

grant they would find it impossible to accept responsibility for maintaining law and order.

Labouchere moved that a Select Committee be appointed on 5th February, 1857, and he spoke only of the Company's desire to renew the Licence for 'British Oregon'. He was supported, among others by Roebuck, who claimed considerable knowledge (as well he might since he was the officially appointed Agent of the Government of Canada) but who was so much in error that he believed that the Company had opposed Selkirk's colony! Roebuck, however, reinforced the plea that the Company was hostile to colonisation by the generalisation that 'where the axe of the settler rang, there the trapper must certainly disappear'. The Select Committee first met on 1st February, and its report was printed on 31st July and 11th August. Labouchere was in the Chair, and the Company must have had the gravest misgivings as it saw Roebuck, Gladstone, Fitzwilliam and others of its most outspoken critics appointed to report on its affairs. But Edward Ellice was also included, and Stanley and Lord John Russell were not unfriendly to the Company.

The 1857 Report on the Company placed first emphasis not upon Vancouver Island but upon the growing desire of Canada to extend its rule and to settle some of the Company's territory, and it prefaced its conclusions by declaring that 'the Crown and people of this country can have no other interest in the territory now administered by the Company, except that it should be dealt with in whatever manner is most conducive to the prosperity and contentment of our North American fellow subjects; and especially in the mode which is best calculated to add to the strength of the great colony of Canada'. Except for Fitzwilliam and Christy the Committee accepted the conclusion that competition in the fur trade must lead to the demoralisation of the Indians and to the indiscriminate destruction of the fur-bearing animals.

Simpson and the Committee had always advocated such a view, and it lay at the back of the whole argument for a Licence for Exclusive Trade. Over the years, at Red River and on the Columbia, they had faced the *reality* of settlement with a policy of encouraging the settlers, of winning their support and their custom; but until it became clear that settlement could no longer be delayed Simpson opposed and obstructed it. Even when settlement had taken place he did his best to keep the settlers dependent on the Company and tied to its store, and above all things to keep them from challenging the Company's control of the fur trade. This was in itself a reasonable view, especially when there were so many parts of the world crying

out for European settlement. But it was not a clear and simple view, and not easy to put to a highly critical committee. Simpson was before the Committee for almost two whole days, and he did not have an easy time. Led by a question from Ellice, he declared that he did not think it would be prejudicial to the fur trade if any part of the territory were set aside for colonisation as long as the exclusive right of the Company to trade furs with Indians was maintained. But this declaration that the Company was not opposed to colonisation as such was taken in the light of his other answers and of the accounts of the territory which had appeared in his narrative of his journey round the world. It was a new experience for Simpson to be harried by questioners and to have his writings quoted against himself, and Roebuck and the others did not spare him, even to the point of twice reading out to him his description of the country between Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake because it was so poetic! The purple patches were probably the work of a ghost writer, but Simpson was reduced to explaining that 'I do see that I have overrated the importance of the country as a country for settlement', and to the lame plea that he was referring to only a few small alluvial plots when he had written that 'The soil of Red River Settlement is a black mould of considerable depth, which, when first tilled, produces extraordinary crops . . . even after 20 successive years of cultivation, without the relief of manure or of fallow, or of green crop, it still yields from 15 to 25 bushels an acre. The wheat produced is plump and heavy; there are also large quantities of grain of all kinds, besides beef, mutton, pork, butter, cheese, and wool in abundance'. It was impossible in the face of such a quotation to convince the Committee that the district was unfavourable for cultivation.

Simpson carried no conviction; on the contrary he left a clear impression that the Company was, and would remain, an opponent of settlement. So the Select Committee recommended that Canada should be allowed to get any lands on her borders which were suitable for settlement, that Red River be taken from the Company's control and if possible should be attached to Canada, and that Vancouver Island should be taken from the Company as soon as it could conveniently be done. The Report left the issue of the Company's chartered rights open and asked for a legal decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on that matter. It left the boundary with Canada to be settled, and it left a recommendation that the grant of exclusive trade should be continued; but where colonisation appeared possible the Select Committee was emphatic that the Company's record, its policy and the very nature of its trade,

made its dominance inappropriate. The Company must not only yield before settlement; it must also cease to hold authority over territories where settlement seemed possible.

Vancouver Island occupied comparatively little of the Committee's attention as it reached these conclusions. Simpson knew little of the island and had never visited it; he excluded it, as not belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, from his generalisation that the Company's territories contained no land of any consequence which was suitable for colonisation. The two chief witnesses about the island were Cooper and Ellice. Cooper, now described as a merchant from Bilston, Staffordshire, declared roundly that although he still held his farm on the island he had no immediate intention of returning there. He was firm in his opinion that reciprocity of trade with the United States and the supersession of the Company by direct British government were the two things which the island needed. As a farmer with six years' experience in the island he carried weight when he flatly contradicted any statement that wheat would not ripen there; it ripened to perfection and the island was one of the finest wheat-growing countries in the world. He was certain that the mere act of altering the administration of the government would of itself be sufficient to make the colony flourish; then men would be under the impression that they would have justice done them, and proper courts of justice, and they would go there without fear of misrule.

It was not strange that Ellice should support such views, for although he rejected Roebuck's assumption 'that a fur company has interests in direct opposition to the colonisation of the country', he gave his opinion 'that a fur company have very little to do with colonisation, and that the Hudson's Bay Company would have done much better if they had never had anything to do with colonisation'. Further, he declared categorically that 'the Hudson's Bay Company would be too glad to make a cession of any part of that territory [Red River] for the purposes of settlement, upon the one condition that Canada shall be at the expense of governing it and maintaining a good police, and preventing the introduction, so far as they can, of competition with the fur trade'.

As far as Vancouver Island was concerned, Ellice told the Select Committee that he had not been consulted when the Company undertook the commitment in 1849, that he thought Lord Grey had acted very wisely from a national point of view in throwing the burden of settlement and administration upon the Company, but that the whole notion of selling land to immigrants was unsound

and impracticable. He thought the practical difficulties were very great even at Red River, that if Canada took over the colony there she would soon entreat the Company to take it back again, and that the natural way of communication with Red River and all the prairie country lay through the United States. He fully agreed 'that if the place is fit for settlement, and you can obtain the means for settling it, it ought to be settled, and it ought not to be occupied by a set of fur-hunters'; but he could see no prospect of any settlement approaching it for many years—and then it would more probably come from the United States than from Canada. So he favoured leaving Red River as it stood; but he thought that Vancouver Island had every advantage to make it the principal naval station in the Pacific, and one of the first colonies and best settlements of this country, and speaking to his doctrine 'that there is not an acre of land fit for settlement which should be kept under any other dominion than that of the actual settlers, wherever it may be situated', Ellice hoped the island would be established as a colony and governed on the ordinary system of English colonies.

Negotiations for the 'resumption' of the island were immediately begun with the Company. Ellice had told the Committee that some £80,000 had already been spent on taking out emigrants and developing the island, and the Colonial Office already had before it an official estimate of £87,000 odd. The question of compensation would take some time to settle, especially as the Company answered the request for a statement of its expenditure by putting in a comprehensive claim for £112,810 1s. 9d., and then within the year increased it to £225,699. The Colonial Office immediately ruled that the government would only pay for expenses incurred on colonisation. The Company accepted this, but while deleting £27,959 spent before the grant of the island was made, and £66,285 for goods left in hand, it claimed that much of the expenditure had been incurred in seeking for coal, and that the 'repurchase' of the island would involve a formal conveyance to Her Majesty's Government. The House of Commons had already resolved that the Company must make a statement of all land which had been sold on the island, and in September 1859 Newcastle (once more at the Colonial Office) offered to compensate the Company for the improvements which it had carried out but denied that it had any title to land, or that the land itself would have to be 'repurchased' by the government. The point at issue here was that the Company claimed 'possessory rights' in the lands which it had occupied before 1849; this, after all, was the basis of its original approach to the Colonial Office in that year!

Newcastle maintained that such land had been occupied without title and that the Licence to Trade gave no right to occupy land. He said he would grant a title to agricultural land on which the Company or the Puget's Sound Company had spent money, he would grant leases for land needed for grazing, and he would grant the actual sites of grazing posts. But he would instruct the Governor to disallow claims which would merely allow the Company to secure increased values, as most of the fur-trade reserve round Victoria would do.

Minor difficulties arose as negotiations proceeded, such as insistence that Chief Justice Cameron's stipend must come from revenue got from licensed alehouses, and a protest against Douglas putting in a man of straw to occupy a farm on the island of Juan de Fuca when he had reported that the islands in the Canal de Arro were unoccupied save for a fishing station. But negotiations centred round the coal costs and the pre-1849 titles to land. The Colonial Office estimated that, when allowance had been made for commercial property, the original claim for £225,699 was reduced to £46,524, of which £12,469 4s. 7d. was for coal prospecting. The Company rejected the idea of arbitrating on the coal claim but suggested that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council should deal with all the claims under the grant of 1849, to which Newcastle demurred at the delay and suggested halving the coal costs; the argument went to and fro, complicated by a revised statement by the Emigration Office, which put the claim for emigrants up from £25,550 to £40,289 19s. 9d. Newcastle asked the Treasury for a grant of £25,000 to make an interim payment, and the Company warned that they would expect interest on the unpaid balances. So in March 1860 agreement was reached that the Judicial Committee should settle the whole affair, and the Company prepared its case and submitted it to Newcastle in April.

So much of agreement enabled Douglas to receive instructions on procedure to deal with the requests for land, some of them from sound families with capital to invest. He was authorised to make grants of land, but while the matter was under investigation he was not to sell any lands which were registered in the name of the Company. Towards the end of 1860 the Attorney-General at last gave an opinion; this was against the Company, for he held that previous titles had been surrendered by the Company in return for the grant of 1849. Douglas, purposefully discussing terms on which he might retire from the fur trade, and becoming visibly less sympathetic to the Company's claims, then began to put up for sale lands to which

the Company thought it had a clear claim. He even put up lands and buildings which he had himself claimed for the Company as recently as 1858. The Company, advised by Douglas's son-in-law and successor Alexander Dallas, was ready to accept the lands actually needed for its posts and trade, and lands up to a hundred acres in extent which had been fenced or ditched; town lots should be restricted to actual business premises but the Company should be allowed to buy other lots at the current market price. An agreement on this basis was reached in December 1861, without prejudice to the appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

But the haggling still continued. The Colonial Office offered £30,000 in full settlement. The Governor suggested £32,500 and then asked £35,000, in addition to the £25,000 which had already been paid; and at the beginning of December 1862 they agreed at £32,500. At this price the Crown 'repurchased' the island, but grants of land sold by the Company prior to 1st January, 1862, were to stand, including of course sales to itself. It had taken five years to get so far towards the 1857 Committee's proposal that Vancouver Island should forthwith be resumed by the Crown. But the story was not yet ended. Douglas had been careful to 'buy' the coal-bearing land at Nanaimo for the Company, so there could be no question about its title there, and the 'Nanaimo Estate' was sold in 1862 to the Vancouver Land and Coal Mining Company for £25,000 cash and a £15,000 mortgage on the property. But Douglas reported that it was impossible to get any agreement on the lands which the Company was alleged to have sold prior to 1862. Surveys and map-making had often been sketchy and one or two plots caused trouble—especially a plot sold to one Lowenberg in 1864, and a plot required for a harbour-master's office at Victoria. Douglas was by 1864 accused of hostility to the Company and its agents. Dallas stood up to his father-in-law on the Company's behalf, and the discussion of the 'Crown Lands Question' was carried on 'with all the bitterness of a family quarrel'. This was distressing and disillusioning, but there was nothing in it to hold up the fulfilment of the agreement which had been made in 1862 and at last, at the end of April 1866, a draft Deed of reconveyance to the Crown was submitted to the Company, and almost ten years after the recommendation had been made and accepted the indenture of surrender was at last completed on 3rd April, 1867.

In some ways, considered as a part of the whole history of the Company, the Vancouver Island episode had been a brief and comparatively simple affair, spun out by the natural and inevitable haggle

with the Treasury and the Colonial Office, and to be accepted merely as a ten years' expedient in which the Company accepted responsibility for colonisation from fear that the project should fall into the hands of more enterprising speculators and should end with an improvident and rapacious colony strategically sited where it could do untold harm to the Company's trade on the Pacific coast.

There is much to support this view, for the fur trade of the island was, and was known to be, negligible. It was the fur trade of New Caledonia, of Fraser River, Thompson River, Fort Langley and Sitka, which the Company wanted to preserve, and to this they gave continuous and purposeful attention. The agreement with the Russian American Company continued to afford satisfaction, and although there was a time when the Company asked for naval protection during the Crimean War, the two Companies came to an arrangement despite the war in Europe, and the agreement was renewed in 1863 for two years to 1865. The Russians then offered the outright sale of their American territories to the Company, but by that time the ownership of land was becoming less and less attractive and the lease, and finally the ownership, of Alaska, passed to the United States.

One of the unmistakable features of the fur trade during the great era of European emigration, the middle years of the nineteenth century, was that the fur frontier moved steadily north. Edward Ellice told the 1857 Committee that the fur trade in the United States was virtually extinct save for a small trade from the Missouri, and that in general terms the supply of peltry had fallen off by a half, perhaps by two-thirds, since the early years of the century. 'All the countries easily reached have been entirely destroyed.' The profitable fur trade of the Company, he said, came from very far north, and he put the southern frontier of the fur trade at about 60° north. He thought the Company got no profit from its southern trade, and that it lost money by its trade near the American frontier. This was, of course, a justifiable business speculation, to be minimised by the development of auxiliary trades in lumber, salmon and other fish, freight services, land speculation and general retail stores. All of these developments were in hand on Vancouver Island by 1857, but that still left the Company (perhaps) using its position on the island as a protective barrier for the northern fur trade rather than as a determined experiment in colonisation.

The motives which impelled the Company to undertake the Vancouver Island commitment in 1849 cannot be clearly established. There was a long-standing policy based upon the concept that

settlement upon the Pacific coast could not be to the Company's interests, and the story of McLoughlin and the Oregon settlers added weight to this. The negotiation for Vancouver Island went against this policy. It was a negotiation which had been almost completely in the hands of Governor Pelly, and his real motives are not clear. The arguments which he used to convince the recalcitrants on the Committee were those of keeping an unwelcome development in the Company's hands. Whatever the reasons for undertaking the commitment, throughout the episode the Company, as was to be expected, remained primarily a trading concern deriving its main profit from the fur trade and devoting its attention to that trade. Regular monthly correspondence via the Isthmus of Panama was maintained with Victoria, the accounts and details of the trade received the closest scrutiny (especially when the profits fell off by £20,790 5s. 11d. in 1850), American developments were most closely watched, and in 1852-3 the Columbia Department was created as an entity separate from the Northern Department of Rupert's Land.

The colonisation of Vancouver Island certainly did not receive the same close attention as did the fur trade to the north. This increased the impression left by the bitter Parliamentary debate which had preceded the grant of Vancouver Island, and the rising hostility of a section of the Canadian press and public. Simpson had long noted the 'strong feeling which exists in Canada against the Honourable Company, in which it is lamentable to find that even Judges and Juries participate', and this, with the disputes and accusations of hostility at Red River, easily turned the manifest failure to establish a populous colony on the island into a 'fur trade conspiracy' to suppress colonisation. The 1857 Report marshalled enough evidence to show that the Company had not acted in any way which could be called hostile to settlers, and that some of its critics were blaming the Company for the general conditions of the period, the California Gold Rush, the distance and cost of the journey, and the attractions of free land elsewhere. It is doubtful whether substantial settlement in the island would have taken place, whatever the management, during the Company's period, and the Company's rule is probably best taken as a temporary move, designed primarily to delay haphazard and potentially dangerous squatting.

The Vancouver Island episode, however, took on very considerable importance because it mingled with the problems of general policy, the claims of Canada, Red River Settlement, the renewal of the Licence for Exclusive Trade, and so was built into the debate

which was reaching its climax in the 1860's—whether the Company had any place in the British North America which was taking shape. This was a British North America in which the fur trade had little place and in which the settlers, and forms of responsible government designed for the settlers, were paramount. The 1857 Committee directed its attention primarily to this point, and the substance of its Report was that when settlement became practicable the Company must go. Ellice, and Simpson, and the Governor and Committee, in their various ways accepted this; and Pelly had written that the Company would probably agree to surrender all its lands held under the Charter, 'if a national advantage is involved', on the same terms as the East India Company had surrendered its territorial possessions. The question was how much weight could be attached to such declarations, and the Company's actual performance on Vancouver Island seemed to show that whatever its professions it would delay, obstruct and yet make profit from, settlement, as much as possible. For as Vancouver Island passed from the Company's control it passed into a new era, in which the basic economic conditions were changed and so serious settlement became possible, and was achieved.

The changes were due to the discovery of gold on Fraser River and Thompson River. The California gold-fields had settled down into a steady industry by about 1851, leaving numbers of prospectors willing to try for a strike elsewhere. When gold was reported at Fort Colville some of them had moved up there in 1855, still within American territory since the post was south of 49°; and when in 1857 news began to come through that Indians on Thompson River were getting gold, the prospectors crossed the frontier to seek their fortunes. The move really began when in 1858 it became known that Douglas had sent eight hundred ounces of gold out to the mint at San Francisco. The rush was on. In May, June and July, of 1858 at least 18,000 people left California for the Fraser, and moves from Oregon, Washington and elsewhere, probably brought the numbers up to 25,000. Other routes were tried, but it was soon found that the only sensible way lay through Victoria, and Victoria became a boom-town overnight. Whatever may be said about the Company's period of rule on Vancouver Island, it had at least left there a strong and courageous Governor and the rudiments of British institutions, and as the diggers flooded in Douglas asked for a small naval and military force, and himself set to work to preserve the island and the mainland from the obvious dangers of such an influx, and from the establishment of an American and anti-British preponderance.

In Victoria Douglas had little difficulty, for there the diggers were only in transit, their great need was to outfit themselves and to secure transportation, and Douglas had established institutions, courts and magistrates, to which they had to conform. On the mainland he had none of these things; there Douglas was not even Governor. But he acted as such, and at the end of 1857 he proclaimed that licences must be got before digging could be started—this he did as representing 'Her Majesty's Colonial Government' and he followed it up as the Chief Factor in command of the Company's affairs by ordering that all ships entering Fraser River must first call at Victoria and be given a licence from the Company's officer there, and be passed by the customs officer. Though he reported them as the 'very dregs of society' the miners behaved well at Victoria and, for example, one shipload of four hundred and fifty went on its way without a single commitment for rioting, drunkenness or other excess.

The Company reported Douglas's proclamations to the Colonial Office and pointed out that the Thompson River gold areas were not within Douglas's jurisdiction as Governor of Vancouver Island. But they promised the assistance of the Company as they warned that the miners, though orderly, were anti-British and that they might refuse an oath of allegiance and would want to set up their own society. The mining itself, in the meantime, had been something of a disappointment. A rich deposit had been found at Hill's Bar on the Fraser, and there were deposits at most of the bars and sand-banks on the bends of the river from Fort Hope upwards. The further upstream, the richer the deposits, up to the Forks of Thompson River; but the costs of getting in food also rose, and so did the opposition of the Indians and the difficulties of the river. The Fraser was still running high in August 1858, and covering many promising bars; and many canoes were wrecked and lives were lost. The quantity of gold recovered was disappointing, but reports were very favourable.

The situation was dangerous as the miners came to the end of their resources. Some pulled out, and most fell back into close residence near Fort Yale. At Hill's Bar they formed their own rules to regulate claims and to keep the peace among themselves, as they had done in California. There was a real possibility that the territory might set up its independent forms of rule, and Douglas insisted upon an oath of allegiance before a miner could hold land, he imposed licences at a fee of ten shillings a month (which he later raised to five dollars), and he exacted fees from all boats and duties on all goods entering

the Fraser. He also tried to restrict boats from carrying any goods save those provided by the Hudson's Bay Company, and this was the one point on which he seriously failed, and in which he was not supported by the home government. For Bulwer Lytton as Colonial Secretary pointed out to Douglas that 'The Hudson's Bay Company have hitherto had an exclusive right to trade with Indians in the Fraser's River territory, but they have had no other right whatever. They have had no right to exclude strangers. They have had no rights of Government or of occupation of the soil. They have no right to prevent or interfere with any kind of trading, except with Indians alone. To claim or exercise any further right is, on their part, a mere usurpation, although, I doubt not, both practised and submitted to in ignorance'. Douglas was therefore to cancel his proclamation requiring a fee per head to be paid to the Company, and excluding goods not bought from the Company.

But Douglas had done much to enforce the more constitutional points in his programme. Visiting the mines himself at the end of May 1858, he appointed a revenue-collector, confirmed the regulations for claims, and impressed his vigorous and determined personality upon the situation. He began to build a trail towards the Upper Fraser, employing many miners for the purpose, but he did not prevent a clash between miners and Indians in which a strong force of miners avenged the murder of two of their number by killing about thirty Indians. This called Douglas up the river again with a small force, to pacify the Indians, to forbid the sale of spirits to Indians, and to appoint two Justices of the Peace.

The mainland of New Caledonia was plainly superseding Vancouver Island in importance, and in its need for government. Here was a territory in which the fur trade must yield to settlement, according to the principles of the 1857 Report, at least as far as was necessary to supply and to govern the considerable number of miners who had flocked in. In August the Company was warned that the Colonial Office proposed to take advantage of the clauses in the Licence for Exclusive Trade that 'nothing herein contained shall extend or be construed to prevent the establishment by us, our heirs or successors, within the territories aforesaid, or any of them, of any colony or colonies, province or provinces, or for annexing any part of the aforesaid territories to any existing colony or colonies . . . And we do hereby reserve full power and authority to revoke these presents, or any part thereof, in so far as the same may embrace or extend to any of the territories aforesaid, which may hereafter be comprised within any colony or colonies'.

The Company had already anticipated this decision and accepted it, and before August 1858 was out it had received and had sent on to Douglas a copy of the *Act to provide for the Government of British Columbia*. The territory, for which the name of British Columbia rather than of New Caledonia had been chosen, was to include Queen Charlotte Islands and all other adjacent islands; but it was not to include Vancouver Island although provision was made for subsequent annexation of it. Douglas was made Governor, so he was Governor of Vancouver Island and of British Columbia at the same time. This seemed a fair enough reflection of the opinion of the 1857 Committee, before which Simpson and Ellice had maintained that the island should be kept separate from the mainland but Cooper and others had claimed that the two should be run together, and the Committee had reported that 'means should also be provided for the extension of the colony over every portion of the adjoining continent on which permanent settlement may be found practicable to the west of the Rocky Mountains'. But the Colonial Office did not think it proper that Douglas should continue to administer the Company's affairs while he also had this double Governorship on his hands.

The stabilisation of the situation on Fraser River was a personal triumph for Douglas. His sterling character and his forthright competence impressed the miners, and his knowledge was unequalled. But when the Colonial Office asked that he should be released, the Company was willing to let him go; indeed the Company seemed better disposed towards him than the Colonial Office, for while the Colonial Office thought it would be improper for him to derive any further income from the fur trade the Company pressed for him to be allowed to retain the retired share of $\frac{1}{85}$ of the profits to which he was entitled under the Deed Poll. There came a point in 1859 at which Douglas threatened to resign his Governorship since he reckoned that his retired share was worth £3,500 and the Colonial Office refused to let him keep it, while the Company refused to buy it off him. But eventually the Company bought him out at his own price.

British Columbia, with a population of about 10,600 at the end of 1858, as the more easily discouraged miners retreated out, had far outstripped Vancouver Island. It was a fully constituted colony with its Governor while the terms for the 'repurchase' of Vancouver Island were still under discussion, and as its capital at New Westminster began to rise on the Lower Fraser the colony began to take shape under the influence of the Company which had opened up the country, and under the influence of a Governor whose character had

been moulded in the fur trade. Here the Licence for Exclusive Trade had been revoked while it still had a year to run, and here the Company was first called upon to make a formal renunciation of its claims in the interests of settlement. It did so without demur.

But while Douglas set to work to carry out his instructions from the Colonial Office, to call a Council and to set up popular institutions, to auction the land, starting from an agreed 'upset price', to insist upon a careful survey of land, to allow men of any nationality as long as they would take an oath of allegiance, and to suppress land-jobbery by the Company's servants, the Company also had problems to solve. Douglas's original position was that the Company should get generous treatment because it had vindicated the British title against alien possession, it had lost considerably by the early revocation of the Licence for Exclusive Trade, and it was still fighting the American government for its possessory rights south of the border and would be faced with a most damaging precedent if the British government now expropriated its rights north of the border. But his views steadily hardened against the Company.

Apart from the inevitable differences over payment in compensation for improvements, the problem at issue was the allocation to the Company of land in the vicinity of its actual trading posts in British Columbia, especially near Yale Fort. Douglas, in his kindly mood, pointed out that the lands under discussion were so far from the sea that they would take years to acquire any value, and in the autumn of 1861 the Company agreed on the terms of a memorandum which Douglas had submitted, giving to the Company lands up to a hundred acres, if they had actually been enclosed, round the posts except at Kamloops and Fort Langley. At those two places the size of the Company's herds of cattle made it necessary to ask up to five hundred acres. This was the basis for a reasonable agreement, and it was marked by the Company's emphatic desire not 'to be exacting' but to come to a settlement. The surveyors inevitably lagged behind, and since they were forbidden to reach out in excursions and forced to survey solidly as they moved inland, it was many years before this agreement of 11th October, 1861, was fully implemented. Late in 1863 a new Governor, Frederick Seymour, was sent up from Honduras to supersede Douglas; he arrived early in 1864 and he volunteered to alter the rules and to allow isolated surveys in order that the boundaries of the Company's lands should be established. Even so, the last phases of the Company's control lingered on, as representative institutions were introduced and the colony took control of its own affairs.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE COMPANY AND GOVERNMENT

The establishment of the colony of British Columbia, and the decision to establish a colony in Vancouver Island, were the climax of a generation's development in the relations of the Company and the British government. The first period of the Licence for Exclusive Trade, granted in 1821, had been due to expire in 1842, but the Company had approached the Board of Trade, and so had been passed to the Colonial Office, early in 1837, asking for an early decision and making a strong point that the peace and prosperity which had come with a unified fur trade had brought such immigration that government and administration had become necessary and important in the Company's territories. Either the licence must be renewed or some other arrangements must be made for the government of the settlements which had gathered round the Company's posts. The spread of the fur trade across the continent, the contests with Americans and with Russians, were then emphasised and the Company proclaimed of Columbia thus early that 'The soil, climate and other circumstances of the country are as much if not more adapted to agricultural pursuits than any other spot in America, and with care and protection the British dominion may not only be preserved in this country, which it has been so much the wish of Russia and America to occupy to the exclusion of British subjects, but British interest and British influence may be maintained as paramount in this interesting part of the coast of the Pacific'.

The Company in 1837 was claiming the function of fostering settlement and of staking the British claim as a reason for renewing the licence, and although the Pacific coast figured in the request it was upon Red River that the case chiefly rested. Much the same balance is visible in a report from Simpson which accompanied the Company's request, for there also it was stated that the possession of Columbia might become an object of very great importance and that the Company was strengthening the British claim 'by forming the nucleus of a colony through the establishment of farms, and the settlement of some of our retiring officers and servants as agriculturists'. But as against this 'nucleus of a colony' (virtually non-existent in 1837) Simpson also focused attention on two thousand whites and three thousand Indians at the Red River Settlement.

While the Company was prepared to plead colonisation, the Colonial Office was prepared to insist upon it. Glenelg in 1837 put the problem to the Board of Trade and was assured that the Company's recent proceedings appeared to have been 'distinguished generally by a liberal and enlightened policy' and that the peculiar nature of the fur trade seemed adequate argument for a renewal of the licence. But Glenelg was not entirely satisfied. 'With whatever confidence the sterility of a great part of that extensive portion of the globe, and its unfitness to sustain any considerable population, may hitherto have been asserted, Lord Glenelg thinks that such statements cannot be assumed as incontrovertible.' So whatever terms might be granted, he thought the licence, if renewed, must contain a clause which would reserve the power of establishing new colonies or provinces within the limits comprised. He thought it possible that one or more colonies might be carved out of the Company's territories, independent of Upper or Lower Canada.

The Company had started the negotiation for renewal in good time, but in September 1837 the Committee had to ask for some decision in order that plans for the ensuing year might start. So Glenelg had to propound his own stipulation, which the Company accepted forthwith. But Glenelg found that the Company had incorrectly expressed his purpose in a draft Charter, and when the Board of Trade had satisfied itself by enquiries into dividends and the financial structure of the trade, he came back to his point and substituted an unequivocal last clause for the form of words which the Company had used in its draft. Here the right to establish colonies and forms of civil government, and to annex the territories or any part of them to any existing colony, and even to revoke the whole grant, was explicitly set out. This also the Company accepted without demur, and when the Treasury, the Board of Trade and the Forestry Commissioners, had all looked into the matter and decided that the rent should be nominal only (five shillings a year after an initial four free years) and the Company had bound itself in the penal sum of £5,000 to secure the execution of justice, and to frame regulations which would ban the use of spirits in the fur trade, the licence was at last received in May 1838.

The Company therefore had its chartered rights in the old territory of Rupert's Land; and 'in all such parts of North America to the northwards and westwards of the lands belonging to the United States of America, as shall not form part of any of our provinces in North America, or of any lands or territories belonging to the said United States of America, or to any European government, state or

power' it had the right of exclusive trade until 13th May, 1859, subject to the possible creation of colonies. The renewal differed from the original Licence for Exclusive Trade of 1821 not only in incorporating Glenelg's 'colonising clause' but also in being a grant to the Company only; for the earlier grant had been made to the coalition of the Company, William McGillivray, Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice. In the 1821 grant they were indeed to trade as the Hudson's Bay Company, but control was increased when the old Northwesters were completely absorbed in 1824, and still more when the Deed Poll was revised in 1834. It was a completely unified Company, bound together for an unspecified period, to which the renewal was granted.

The Company had emerged from this episode in 1838 with a good deal of approval for the peace and retrenchment which it had wrought. The successful conclusion of its arrangement with the Russian American Company at this time also brought approval. But complacency could not last long; in Oregon and at Red River alike, criticism of the Company, based upon American support for the free settler and the free trader, was taking a new purpose, and the Company's expedient of drafting off the dissatisfied settlers from Red River to oppose the Americans in Oregon proved unsuccessful. The free traders of Red River, especially McDermot and James Sinclair, were building up a challenge based on the American market and on the presence of Norman Kittson at Pembina. The very existence of a free community of settlers upon the Company's chartered territories was called into question; the Company's control of administration, justice, taxation and the conduct of private trade, roused deep and bitter opposition and claimed the sympathy of liberal politicians at Westminster.

In June 1842 the House of Commons began to stir itself and the Company was asked to put before the House the documents upon which its position rested, the Charter of 1670 and the existing Licence for Exclusive Trade. This it did, explaining that the original Licence of 1821 had included the McGillivrays and Ellice but that 'These gentlemen subsequently surrendered their interest to the Hudson's Bay Company, to whom Her Majesty was pleased to make the Grant of 1838'. For the moment criticism was silenced; the documents would, without any doubt, stand up to investigation, and the Company had the ear of the government. As Simpson preened himself on his interviews with Peel and Aberdeen, as he took counsel with Metcalfe and Cathcart and aired his views to Warre and Vavasour, it was the Company's great opponent Gladstone who, as

Colonial Secretary, took the decision to send the detachment of the 6th Regiment of Foot to Red River. He did so with an ill grace, after changing his mind, and with a warning that a Chartered Proprietary Company could not demand support in the same way as a Crown Colony; but American threats convinced Gladstone. It was 'happily unnecessary' to press his point, and the troops were sent.

The presence of troops, until they were withdrawn in 1848, proved a great source of strength to the Company, and Major Crofton was admirably qualified for his task. But the Duke of Wellington refused to accept the Company's estimate of Fort Garry, the government insisted that the purpose of the troops was to create a *cadre* of regular soldiers round which a large force of mounted irregular skirmishers might be embodied, and although the Company had at one time felt the need for troops to be such that it was ready to face any cost to make the forts efficient, it cried off when the estimate came to £120,000, and accepted the withdrawal of the regular troops and the substitution of pensioners. The withdrawal of the regular troops was certainly a sign that the Company's exploitation of the American dispute to secure a garrison was terminated. The pensioners were useless as a defence force, they were less valuable as a support for the Company, and they were intended to blend in with the colony in a way in which the regular troops were not. Not only was Major Caldwell made Governor of Assiniboia, independent of the Company, but the pensioners themselves were intended to become colonists, with their grants of twenty-acre plots which would become their own property at the end of seven years' service.

Although the Oregon boundary dispute still gave the Company considerable political support, as far as Red River was concerned the Company had lost the sympathy of the government—never very strong—and the news that the troops were to be withdrawn reached Red River in a form which made it seem to be due to the petition against the Company which Alexander Isbister had organised. The Company had successfully rebutted the allegations of Sinclair, Isbister, McLaughlin and the petitioners organised by Belcourt, it had been supported by Elgin and by Crofton, it had shewn that its profits were moderate, that it traded no spirits, and that if the trade were thrown open then 'Rum would become the universal medium of Exchange with the natives'. It had revealed the Reverend Herbert Beaver as a prejudiced and unreliable witness, had shewn that the *métis* and the settlers were allowed to trade, and it had Crofton as evidence that the petition was the work of a few seditious men and

that the Company's rule was mild and protective and admirably adapted for conditions at Red River.

Yet as the end of the Oregon Boundary dispute brought the Company's proposals for Vancouver Island under discussion, the Isbister petition was only just in the background, and the Company could not rest content. In the debate of 18th August, 1848, Gladstone did his best to turn the attention of the House from a decision on policy for Vancouver Island into an enquiry into the history, practices and chartered rights, of the Company. He referred back to Isbister's petition (and to Robson and Umfreville), and when he had ended his long and bitter oration, in which he alleged that the Company dare not put the Charter to the test of a legal decision, he was properly told by Charles Buller that much of his speech was wide of the mark and was only proper for an enquiry into the Company. The need for some swift arrangement for Vancouver Island was such that Parliament's attention was confined to that issue. Lord Russell spoke in favour, and the adverse vote which Gladstone was supporting was defeated. The Company was not to be the subject of an enquiry; rather, it was given extra powers and responsibilities—and the House then turned to debate the salaries of certain professors at Oxford and Cambridge!

But the day was not yet completely won, for in February 1849 the House of Commons asked that all the correspondence on complaints against the Company should be placed before the House, and in June the Earl of Lincoln (later to become Colonial Secretary as the Duke of Newcastle) gave the House a diatribe against the Company which lasted four and a half hours. At the end of that time he still had not finished, but members had sneaked away, there was no longer the necessary quorum, and the House was counted out. The respite was short; in July 1849 a motion was accepted that the legal validity of the Charter might be ascertained. This the Company welcomed, sending a copy and suggesting that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council might be asked to decide on the Charter.

At the same time the Company sent to the Colonial Office a full report on the troubles at Red River, and in particular of the Sayer Trial. The Company claimed that the vindication of the 'alleged right of free trade' was largely due to the priest Belcourt, inciting the *métis* by inflammatory letters from Pembina, and that the verdict had been achieved by the armed intervention of the mob and had resulted in a claim by the *métis* to interfere with the judicial appointment of the Recorder, Adam Thom. The result of the trial was that trade was free at Red River Settlement. The colony entered upon a new phase

in its history, a phase marked by the end of Company control and by an 'informal and slovenly balance of forces' between the Company, private traders, and independent settlers. It was a phase in which hostile feelings could not so easily be roused, and in which Simpson's earlier dictum was largely justified—that but for the hostility of Belcourt, the intrigues of the *métis* leaders and 'the designs of interested parties in England', the Red River settlers might be the most comfortable and happy population in the British Empire.

But if something of a *modus vivendi* had been achieved at Red River, the 'interested parties' in England had by no means been silenced. Isbister had appealed to the Colonial Office for a judicial verdict on the Charter at much the same time as the House of Commons had made its request, and when the Law Officers of the Crown had considered the Company's position he was informed of their view. This was that the Charter was almost certainly valid. But in order to resolve any doubts, the Law Officers suggested that a judicial decision should be sought by Isbister or some other person entering a petition which would be the base for an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Isbister declined to be responsible for such a move, and since the Colonial Office were advised by the Law Officers that the Charter would probably be upheld, they also refused to move in the matter. So the Charter remained, threatened but still unchallenged in a court of law.

The Company was for the moment almost into calm waters, but not quite. As the Council of Assiniboia refused to dismiss Thom at the request of the *métis*, and Simpson found a way round by making him Clerk of the Court, the 'troublesome fellow' John McLaughlin wrote to Grey from Belfast to challenge the evidence which supported the Company, and the Company's own statements made to Parliament. He was silenced, and he was a shifty and unreliable spokesman to face the Company. Then, in 1850 as the Company struggled to realise the value of its possessory rights in Oregon by a sale to the American government, came a challenge from the American Legation in London that the Company annually traded large quantities of spirituous liquors to the Indians on the north-west frontier of the United States. The American government considered its note a 'friendly remonstrance', and it asked for the co-operation of the British government in repressing the evil by issuing suitable instructions to the Company. The origin of the complaint was a report from Henry Sibley, and it duly found its way from Palmerston as Foreign Secretary to Grey as Colonial Secretary, and so to the Company. Governor Pelly quoted Simpson at length in an

unqualified denial. The occasional 'regale' which was given to the Indians could do little harm, the frontier was respected, and on no occasion anywhere did the Company barter spirits for furs. Turning from defence to attack, Pelly claimed that the illicit trade in furs at Red River and Pembina was based upon spirits, and that the spirits came from the United States, to which the furs went.

As between bartering spirits for furs and giving presents of spirits to Indians, the distinction was a fine one, and Simpson in writing to Pelly agreed that even presents of spirits ought to be abandoned if only the Americans would do likewise. But the Company could really be quite convincing about suppression of the liquor trade, and Palmerston and Grey were well content and roundly told the Americans of Pelly's statement 'that although the Hudson's Bay Company employ all the means in their power to suppress this traffic, their efforts have been in a great measure defeated by the encouragement which it receives on the American side of the border'.

The Company's difficulties at Red River were peculiar, for they arose as much from the existence of the *métis* group with its claims to hunt and to own the soil as from the presence of the immigrant settlers; and the *métis*' thriftless way of life, his dependence on the hunt, his dislike of Recorder Thom and his drift towards America, all complicated the situation. This aspect of the Red River problem was summarised when in 1851 the powerful Aborigines Protection Society received a petition signed by five hundred and forty of the *métis*, claiming freedom of trade and the right to the land, and protesting against the removal of Belcourt and the appointment of Thom. Such a petition was sure of warm support from the Aborigines Protection Society, and it was sent on to the Colonial Office by them. But the Sayer trial and the tacit freedom to trade even in furs which followed had virtually ended this phase of opposition from the *métis* at Red River.

There were, of course, to be repercussions, as when in 1856 the Company reported activity by American troops in the Pembina area, and a move from the *métis* leaders towards them, with a danger that freedom of trade and a consequent increase in the use of spirits might lead to bloodshed. It could not be expected that the *métis* would completely accept the situation, and they made their last bid in the Riel Rebellion of 1870. That rebellion, however, was the outcome of resentment provoked primarily by Canada, and until the Red River problem came within the orbit of Canada the settlement at Red River managed tolerably well and achieved its own form of stability.

For the Company the situation at Red River was not unpromising. The growth of a settled population meant that the fur trade sank into the background. Simpson was given a free hand to conduct the opposition to Joseph Rolette, who had replaced Kittson at Pembina, and he took the straight commercial expedient of outbidding him for the half-breeds' furs. But the 'general trade' of the colony, conducted from the Company's store, became more important as the fur trade declined. From a small trade in 1843, Fort Garry had become the most important seat of the general trade within the Company's territories by 1860. The Governor and Committee thoroughly approved the development, and Simpson reorganised the transport system to Red River and was beginning to take in goods in considerable quantities through the United States from St. Paul. There was a possibility of saving a year's interest on the cost of supplies for the fur trade if this route could be developed, even allowing the goods to stay over the winter at Red River to be checked and repacked ready for forwarding. But this was a route in which many hazards had to be run, in which the supervision of American freight firms left much to be desired, and in which Simpson met much criticism from within the Company.

In its way the adoption of this southern route marked the end of the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, properly so-called as a Company based upon the approach to Rupert's Land through Hudson Bay. This had been the concept which the Company had been formed to exploit. The sea-route, and the knowledge and ability to use it, had been the Company's great asset during the long struggles with the French, and then with the North West Company; and after the coalition of 1821 Simpson had steadily forced the supply system of the Company northward through York Fort and the Bay. The route through Quebec and Montreal was reserved for swift expresses and important people, as was the alternative from Boston or New York. Heavy goods, immigrants and, significantly, soldiers, came in through the Bay. Railway development in the United States called for a realistic re-appraisal, but the changes which Simpson was working out did not commend themselves to the Company's Chief Factor at York Fort, and they marked a shift in the geographical allegiance of the Company—away from the Bay and towards the south.

The issue to be fought out in the last ten years of the Company's chartered history was precisely this, whether the old geographical allegiance to the Bay should be replaced by ties to the south or by ties to the east; whether the prairies should go to the United States

or to Canada. The Bay was, of course, by no means completely superseded either in practice or in men's loyalties. But the more southern routes to the area of Lake Winnipeg had become so much more practicable in a railway age that a new approach was demanded, and Lake Winnipeg itself had become the point of departure not only for the fur trade but for the wheat lands of Saskatchewan and the prairies. There was indeed a possibility that independent colonies might arise in the prairies, but it was probable that their independence would be short lived, that they would be peopled from America and would soon be absorbed in the United States. As yet, in the early 1850's, the likelihood seemed to be that Red River's trade and loyalty would gravitate towards America rather than towards Canada, for there appeared a strong possibility that Canada, formed by a union of the two provinces as Durham had recommended and reaching out towards the prairies in rivalry with America, might herself succumb to the economic strength which was developing to the south.

Reciprocity was one possible remedy, but to many annexation seemed the only solution, and the Montreal Annexation Manifesto of October 1849 had put an impressive case in which loyalty to a distant (and perhaps indifferent) mother-country was weighed against the economic advantages of annexation. 'Whilst the adjoining States are covered with a net-work of thriving railways, Canada possesses but three lines, which together, scarcely exceed fifty miles in length.' The Annexation Manifesto was couched in terms of loyalty and affection, and Elgin always treated the annexationist movement as the barometer by which to measure the prosperity of Canada rather than as a serious thing in itself. The Reciprocity Treaty with the United States did much to blunt the edge of the movement. But both the arguments adduced and the very existence of the movement explain why the drift of Red River seemed to be southwards rather than eastwards.

Canada, however, was beginning to reach out westwards. While insisting that Canada and Rupert's Land were separate territories, and demanding customs dues on goods brought south from the Bay (from the Southern Department, from Moose and Albany over the Height of Land) to Canada, the Canadian government was also putting forward the possibility that some of the Company's territories, suitable for settlement, might be made over to Canada. As the Company entered upon its free-trade régime at Red River with the Charter 'almost a nullity', set at nought by Americans and their half-breed allies, so uncertain was the Company's authority that

servants who insisted on the Company's rights had to be quieted. Thus the resolute George Barnston arrested the free trader Bannatyne, only to see him released instead of being brought to trial. The Saskatchewan servants had to be disciplined for mutinous conduct in 1853, and Simpson wrote gloomily of the possibility of a general strike, of an outbreak at Red River, of the destruction of York Factory and of the entrance into the country of a well-organised opposition.

All depended upon actual competence, not upon privilege, and Simpson thought the Company could do as well without the Charter as with it, and by 1856 was wondering whether the Company might not make a virtue of necessity by offering to surrender the Charter to Her Majesty's Government in return for compensation on terms similar to those which the East India Company had got. This was a proposal which Pelly put forward, but without any great conviction. He had put his own convictions in 1849, when in his 'Statement of the Rights as to Territory, Trade, Taxation and Government, claimed and exercised by the Hudson's Bay Company on the Continent of North America' he had warned that the Company would expect from the Canadian government compensation for any expropriation.

Over the Company hung the inevitable enquiry when the grant of Vancouver Island should end, and when the Company should sue for a renewal of its Licence for Exclusive Trade, in 1859 or sooner. In fact the two issues came together in the Parliamentary Enquiry and Report of 1857. By the time that Labouchere called his Select Committee together a large section of Canadian society was looking towards Red River. The *Toronto Globe* under the editorship of George Brown was publicising the fear that the West might easily be lost to Canada, and the possibilities of a railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific were also under discussion, linked with suggestions for giving Britain predominance on the ocean routes.

On the eve of the Enquiry Governor-General Sir Edmund Head had reported to the Colonial Office that all sorts of speculations were in the air and that it was generally assumed 'that there is an inherent right on the part of Canada to some of the spoils of the Hudson's Bay Company'. Labouchere suggested that Canada might be represented at the Enquiry, and the Canadians took full advantage of the chance to put their ambitions before the home government, the Council of the Colony claiming that 'the western boundary of Canada extended up to the Pacific Ocean'. But though attempts were made to substantiate this claim by a map and by historical exercises

showing that the prairies were opened up by the French, and later by the Northwesters, from Montreal, Canada's ambitions and claims were not so clear-cut. The recent crisis with the United States, caused largely by recruitment in the States during the Crimean War, had made the problems of defence paramount. Five regiments and a vast amount of stores had been sent to Canada, but it was clear that the imperial government strongly wished to contract its obligations for North America and that the Canadian government was in no position to assume such responsibilities. How then could claims for an extension of rule be made?

Among thoughtful Canadians the problem was accepted on a realistic basis. The real trouble, as Sir Edmund Head pointed out, was not how Canada might acquire some of the Company's territory, but how she should then administer and defend it. This sober realism was, however, overlaid with the stridency of Canadian politics, and any Canadian case would have to be expansive and assertive in order to silence the claims of George Brown and the expansionists. So, while a vague but assertive answer was sent to Labouchere, the former leader of the Liberal-Conservative Party, Chief Justice of Canada West, William Henry Draper was sent to London to put Canada's case. Draper was given a good deal of latitude by the Canadian government, but he was told to stress the importance of defining the frontier round Lake Superior, round Red River, and thence to the Pacific, so that American immigration could be kept at bay and those lands could be occupied by subjects of the Queen, on behalf of the British Empire. For this purpose he was to oppose any licence or any recognition of rights for the Company which would interfere with the fair and legitimate occupation of tracts adapted for settlement.

Draper was not given power to commit Canada, and when he came to give evidence before the Committee he was very much the Chief Justice, sane, balanced and broadminded. He put his personal view that the western boundary of Canada should be at the Rockies but he hoped that Canada might build a railway from coast to coast, charmingly apologising if he should seem to be 'very visionary'. He was by no means categorical about the boundary which he would like to see drawn, and he admitted that it was not known whether Canada could establish sufficiently easy communication with Red River or whether she could effectively govern that territory. He asked for surveys to ascertain the facts and for judicial tribunals to establish rights, but he accepted the need for the Company to maintain a monopoly of the fur trade although he suggested that the

fur trade should be moved further north, so as to leave the prairie lands open for settlement. Draper, in fact, although he was quite convinced as a lawyer that 'the monopoly of trade' was illegal, was not very interested in the fur trade and was content to see the Company control it; but he wanted the lands themselves made available for settlement under the Canadian government, and for this purpose he had prepared a case (which he did not divulge) and was ready to retain counsel on Canada's behalf if, as he hoped, the right to land under the Charter was put to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Meanwhile in Canada the movement for annexing the Company's territories was gathering momentum. Petitions flowed in for the annexation of the Company's lands, especially for incorporation of the Red River Settlement, and the Board of Trade of Toronto submitted a petition against renewal of the Licence for Exclusive Trade, while a Canadian Select Committee was set up to enquire into the Company's rights and administration. This Committee forwarded to the Select Committee in London a petition from Roderick Kennedy and five hundred and forty-seven other settlers. Kennedy protested at the Company's predominance at Red River and asked for incorporation into Canada; 'We have represented our grievances to the Imperial Government, but through the chicanery of the Company and its false representations we have not been heard, and much less have our grievances been redressed. It would seem, therefore, that we have no other choice than the Canadian plough and printing press, or the American rifle and Fugitive Slave law'. For those who loved the British name and were 'proud of that glorious fabric, the British Constitution', as Kennedy and his co-signators claimed to be, there was an urgent need to secure attachment to Canada before American expansion engulfed them.

Practical difficulties and legal subtleties were made light of, and three witnesses whom the Canadian Select Committee examined were confident that easy communication could be made from Lake Superior to Rainy Lake and so to Lake Winnipeg, and that a moderate expenditure on roads and portages would divert the Red River trade from St. Paul's to Lake Superior, and so to Canada.

There was much in the evidence put before the 1857 Committee, from both sides, which bore the obvious impression of partisanship. Canada's ambitions were clear, but it was not clear what Canada could actually achieve. Chief Justice Draper himself had doubts on this score, and the Select Committee reached a swift and praise-

worthy conclusion when it reported that 'it is essential to meet the just and reasonable wishes of Canada to be enabled to annex to her territory such portion of the land in her neighbourhood as may be available to her for the purposes of settlement, with which lands she is willing to open and maintain communications, and for which she will provide the means of local administration'. That had been anticipated by a letter from Governor Pelly to Labouchere in July 1857: 'Assuming, however, that the object of the proposed inquiry is to obtain for Canada land fit for cultivation and the establishment of agricultural settlers, I would observe that the Directors are already prepared to recommend to the shareholders of the Company to cede any lands which may be required for that purpose. The terms of such cessions would be a matter of no difficulty between Her Majesty's Government and the Company'.

Draper had suggested that the Company's territorial rights should be decided by a judicial or quasi-judicial process; this would quite probably involve a decision upon the validity of the Charter as a whole, but that (to his legal mind) was a quite separate proposition which he did not recommend. What he wanted a decision upon was the existence, and the extent, of the territorial rights of the Company. Round this the Select Committee skirted very cautiously. A clause in the first draft report recommended Draper's proposal of an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, to which Pelly also had assented on behalf of the Company. But a strong majority of the Committee, including Roebuck and Gladstone, who taunted the Company with an alleged reluctance to put the Charter to the test, ruled out this clause and merely left the chartered rights for government to deal with. Canada might therefore make any specific claim to land and it would be for the home government to effect an accommodation with the Company.

If the Select Committee skirted round the question of the chartered rights of the Company, a good deal of plain speaking had gone on during the enquiry. The Colonial Office submitted Draper's suggestion to the Law Officers of the Crown and asked them whether it would be proper for the Crown to raise the question of the validity of the Charter itself, whether the Company's claims to territorial rights, government, exclusive trade and taxation, might be tested, and whether the geographical extent of the territorial claim (if it existed) could be raised for legal decision. Finally, if it were thought improper for the Crown to raise these questions, the Law Officers were asked whether the Government of Canada, or some private person, might do so, as had been suggested to Isbister in 1850. To

this the Law Officers replied that the Charter could not be taken merely as an abstract legal problem; it must be considered in the light of the fact that the Company had enjoyed the Charter for almost two centuries, and that it had been recognised both by the government and by the legislature. 'Nothing could be more unjust, or more opposed to the spirit of our law, than to try this charter as a thing of yesterday, upon principles which might be deemed to be applicable to it, if it had been granted within the last 10 or 20 years.' This consideration, however, was to apply only to the territorial rights claimed under the Charter, not to a monopoly of trade or to an exclusive administration of justice. The Crown, thought the Law Officers, could not properly raise the question of the general validity of the Charter, and on every legal principle the Company's territorial rights should be deemed valid. The other rights claimed, of government, taxation, justice and exclusive trade, except in so far as they stemmed from ownership of the land, could not be insisted upon as having been granted by the Crown, for any ordinance which the Company might make, under the Charter, would need to conform to the Common Law. As for the geographical extent of the territorial rights, this the Law Officers agreed might be established by a quasi-judicial enquiry; but this would need the consent of both parties, and any decision would have force only by agreement.

Probably the whole of this very encouraging legal opinion was known by the Company; in any case they knew that during the struggle with the North West Company the Law Officers had been in favour of the territorial rights, and they were officially informed by Labouchere of those parts of the opinion which touched upon the territorial rights of the Company and the possibility of securing a quasi-judicial verdict from the Privy Council. To this the Company replied accepting the suggestion, but pointing out that all the individuals who had accepted or bought lands from the Company would also be involved.

The Governor then took the opportunity, in view of the House of Commons' Committee and the agitation in Canada, to state the principles upon which the Company would act in future. In a comprehensive letter of 18th July, 1857, he said the Board would accept any decision by the government with regard to the Company's exceptional rights and trade, relying upon fair treatment and just compensation if the monopoly should be abolished. He pointed out that the Company had brought the Indian country to a state of unprecedented tranquillity, that it had developed a highly remunerative

trade, and that it had received the approbation of every Secretary of State for the Colonies since the coalition of the two companies. But the Committee would not accept a renewal of the responsibilities which went with the Licence for Exclusive Trade unless they could be sure of the support of the government. On this they required full and explicit assurance. They considered that the Licence for Exclusive Trade was the best means which the government could devise for securing the administration, peace and security, of the Indian country. The Company then stressed the view that any mixed authority, setting government agents to act with those of the Company, would be a source of weakness, and urged that the government already had power to deal with the situation, since the Charter gave adequate administration for ordinary purposes and the Crown could appoint judges and establish courts independent of the Company whenever it was thought expedient.

The conclusion of this policy-statement was clear and uncompromising: 'The Board is willing to remain in the exercise of its present functions; to concur in any arrangements proposed by Government or Parliament, which will not interfere with or obstruct their power of independent management of the concerns of the Company; and to give assistance and support to any magistrates appointed by the Government in endeavouring to maintain the present undisturbed state of the Indian territories; but they will decline to undertake a divided administration, or accept the responsibility of carrying on the Government of the country, under the exceptional circumstances of the case, unless assured of the same cordial and unhesitating support from Her Majesty's Government which they have hitherto enjoyed'.

Nothing could be accomplished at Red River if the known official view was that the Company's administration was disapproved and that Canada would take over, and might even be set as a watch-dog upon the Company, as soon as possible. If it should be the opinion of the government that Canada ought to take over the settlement, then the Company would yield it up on reasonable terms. But in that case Canada must be responsible for administration. So in dealing with the renewal of the Licence for Exclusive Trade the Company stipulated that it should be a renewal for twenty-one years, with power to withdraw at two years' notice. A grant for any shorter period would be interpreted as casting doubts on the Company's rights and on its enjoyment of the confidence of government, and it would be impossible to accept responsibility for law and order under those conditions.

This point of view was accepted by the Colonial Office, and in January 1858 the Company was told that it was the intention to renew the licence for twenty-one years from 30th May, 1859, with a reservation that colonies might be established. Vancouver Island was to be a colony forthwith, and the Company was asked to state its claim for money laid out for colonial purposes. So far there was agreement. But the Colonial Office then came to the problem which was to complicate the issue. The Colonial Office wished the boundary with Canada to be settled. But Canada, by the end of 1857, had taken the stand that she would not originate an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council unless the general validity of the Charter was also discussed, as well as the extent of the territorial rights. This was against the advice of the Law Officers of the Crown, was more than Draper had suggested, and was something more than the Company had said it would accept.

The Colonial Office could not force Canada to initiate action on the more limited question, and the Company thought it unreasonable that it should be expected to be accessory to an action which put the whole of its rights in issue. To clear up a point, such as the geographical extent of the territorial rights, was one thing; to participate in a challenge to the whole Charter was another, and the Company decided that if Canada wished to challenge the Charter she must do so in an open legal suit, in which the Company would defend its claims and in which the loser would be liable for costs and damages. For the moment, the Colonial Office agreed that it must be left to Canada to decide what course to take, but Labouchere suggested that, as a condition of the renewal of the licence, the Company must surrender the lands which Canada required for settlement, so that they would be freely available for annexation when Canada had made a road or some other line of communication and had given some evidence of her intention to lay out townships and to develop the territories. It was probable that Red River and Saskatchewan would be the first areas to be so required.

These proposals were acceptable to the Committee and to its new Governor, John Shepherd, elected in 1856. But whatever shifts might take place on the frontiers of settlement, however Canada might approach the issue, the Company was still a fur-trade company. If it was to continue to accept the duties of administration further north, where settlement was not under discussion, the Company must remain solvent and the fur trade must remain profitable. The basic conditions of the fur trade remained constant and Governor Shepherd, in notifying the Company's assent, pointed out that

the loss of the pemmican from Red River and the Saskatchewan would be a serious blow to the fur trade, and he also made it clear that the Company would expect Canada to preserve order at Red River and on the Saskatchewan and to prevent lawless and dishonest adventurers using those areas as a spring-board from which to advance into the remainder of the Company's territories. The Company was ready to cede the territories, and even to accept the granting away of leases of minerals by the government, but it expected from the governments to be set up at Red River and the Saskatchewan an effective assumption of the duties of administration, co-operation in protecting the whole frontier from foreign encroachment, and support in the enjoyment of the remaining lands.

Through 1858 this remained the position, as the discovery of gold on the Fraser and the development of British Columbia made the British and the Canadian governments alike more aware of the importance of preserving the route across the prairies, and as the Company's action on Vancouver Island and on the mainland made it clear that there was to be no intransigent insistence upon territorial rights, merely upon a proper assessment of due compensation. The Company would part with the land upon reasonable terms, but Canada wanted first to ascertain the basic legal validity of the Charter and would not do this in the only way which the Company found acceptable and which the Law Officers of the Crown had advised, by appearing as a plaintiff. The truth was that in Canada the annexation of the prairies was viewed as part of the struggle for power between the great parties of that recently-united colony, for if the prairies were filled with English-speaking and Protestant immigrants they would give the political balance to Upper Canada as against the predominantly French-speaking Lower Canada, especially if (as George Brown was advocating) the franchise were adjusted so as to give representation by population instead of by provinces. The British government was anxious, and almost insistent, that Canada should take the responsibilities involved. But Cartier as Prime Minister of Canada could not sponsor an annexation which would overwhelm the Lower Canada which he represented; his only solution was that the Company should be dispossessed and the prairie territories made into separate provinces, which might one day be absorbed into a federation. Canada, too, was suffering a recession from the prosperity which had come with Reciprocity, the Crimean War (and high wheat prices), and vigorous immigration. There was financial crisis in both Britain and the United States in 1857; and money for railways, as for other expansion, was not available. There was a

collapse in land speculation, wheat prices fell as the Crimean War ended, and harvests were disastrous in 1857 and again in 1858; immigration dwindled and almost stopped.

As the difficulty of deciding upon a seat of government which would be acceptable both in Canada East and in Canada West underlined the differences, there seemed a real possibility that the only solution might be to dissolve the Union, to allow each province to go its own way but to unite them in a federation. The victory of the Macdonald and Cartier government in the election of December 1857 was won despite the clamour of George Brown and the *Toronto Globe* for expansion to the west; their government was based upon a precarious and personal balance, preserving the loyalties of moderate members of both the French and the English communities by the opportunist system of 'double majorities' in which the administration was based upon a majority in each section—French and English. A policy of federation would offer a solution to these problems and it would also open the way to the admission of the west; and Alexander Galt strongly urged federation as the solution for Canada's problems in 1858 during a debate on Representation by Population, the opposition's remedy which would end the system of double majorities and would give political predominance to the immigration-swollen western province. Federation, therefore, as put forward by Cartier in 1858, was part of a wider issue in which, strangely, the system of 'double majorities' on which his power was based, and even the Union of the two Canadas, would give way to something larger but as yet barely specified.

The Company watched the difficulties of Canada with a sympathy tempered by fear that a solution might be found by ill-judged expansion westwards. The serious danger to both Company and colony seemed to threaten from the south, from the United States rather than from Canada, and the Company told Labouchere at this time that despite the hostile agitation of parties in Canada 'our prosperity is not opposed to that of Canada, neither is the advancement of Canadian interests incompatible with ours'. On the contrary, in all matters of importance their interests were identical, and they consisted in the prevention of American advance into the prairies.

In his important letter of 18th July, 1857, accepting the suggestion of an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and setting out the Company's principles, Governor John Shepherd had written that the shareholders were ordinary people who had invested their money on the faith of the Charter and in confidence of the permanent character of their rights and property, and that they were in

general indifferent to any other question than the security of their capital and dividends. In private correspondence, as in his evidence before the Select Committee, Bear Ellice had emphasised the same points. Nothing would be so easy as for Canada to acquire the Company's territories, but she would then saddle herself with the costs and responsibilities of administration and defence; and for 'the fee simple of the whole territory north of forty-nine and between Canada and the Rocky Mountains, the whole trade and establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company' Canada must expect to pay about a million pounds. This point was well taken by the Colonial Office, and in August 1858 Bulwer Lytton wrote that 'The Company is a trading association or a Stock proprietary; and I venture to presume that there is no surrender of land or concomitant privilege which it will not make provided it obtain either security against or compensation for any pecuniary loss which such surrender may inflict on its shareholders'. The trouble was that Canada was in no position to undertake such a commitment as might be necessary, and that the British government was very reluctant to do so for a federal union which did not as yet exist and which might never be created.

Canada, it is true, was deeply interested, and there was much agitation for annexation. The Governor, Sir Edmund Head, diligently reported a debate on the lease of the King's Posts, a Joint Address from both branches of the Legislature on the Company of 7th May, 1858, a resolution in the Legislative Assembly on 21st May and a discussion on 22nd, an Address to the Queen in August praying that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council might settle the boundary 'without restriction as to any question Canada might present on the validity of the Charter'.

With all the general talk and the legal quibbles, real knowledge of the territory was very limited, as the evidence before the Select Committee of 1857 had revealed. But knowledge was spreading. The appearance of American troops on the frontier (in 1856) had led to a detachment of a hundred to a hundred and twenty officers and men of the Canadian Rifles being sent from Montreal to Red River, by way of York Factory, in 1857. This caused something of an uproar in Canada, where it was proclaimed that Canadians were being sent to oppress the Indians on behalf of the Company, but the men and their families more than redressed the balance by their favourable reports of the Company's administration. Then, too, in order to see what the value of the region was, and in particular to ascertain whether the glib assumptions that transport from Lake Superior to Red River would be easy, the Canadian government sent off George

Gladman and a party of men to explore a route between Fort William and Fort Garry, and this the Company promised to assist. It was equally important to ascertain where the truth lay between the statements that the prairies were admirable wheat country and the statements, particularly of Simpson, that the wheat crop was uncertain and could easily be spoiled. Captain John Palliser was therefore sent out by the home government to survey the prairies and to report on them, and here again the Company lent its assistance.

Palliser's expedition lasted longer and cost more than was anticipated, but he left a comprehensive proposal for a Crown Colony bounded on the east by the line of the river system from Lake of the Woods to Lake Winnipeg, on the south by the 49th parallel and on the north by the 54th parallel. The new colony would stretch across the prairies to the Rockies, and though Palliser felt that the wealth of the region would be derived from grazing rather than from wheat, and that access would have to come up from the United States, he reported that a railway could be built from Red River to the Rockies. On the whole Palliser's report was ultra-cautious, but it gave Red River, Swan River and Saskatchewan, as districts suitable for settlement, and it went far both to stimulate and to satisfy curiosity. Canada also was making serious efforts to gauge the value of the prairies, and Professor H. Y. Hind of Toronto University conducted a prolonged survey and estimated that there were some eleven million acres of arable land in and about Red River, the Assiniboine, the Forks of the Saskatchewan, Carrot River, the Touchwood Hills, Qu'Appelle River, and Swan River.

All of these reports added greatly to knowledge, and in their different ways they pointed to the possibilities of opening the prairies and of gaining access to Red River and thence to the prairies. For this purpose the North West Transportation, Navigation, and Railway Company, formed in 1858, set to work to beat out a satisfactory route. A steamer was set to work on Lake Superior up to Fort William, and then the rivers to Red River were taken in hand, helped by a Canadian government subsidy on mail taken to Red River. Further plans to drive a mail-route, and perhaps even a telegraph line, across to the Pacific coast, were dropped when the British Postmaster-General refused a contract, and the delivery of mail at Red River by the Fort William route merely emphasised the great superiority of the normal approach from the United States, via St. Paul.

The North West Transportation, Navigation, and Railway Company was something more serious and purposeful than previous

projects for transcontinental routes. For one thing it had behind it the news of gold on Fraser River, and the interest in the prairies which the 1857 Select Committee had revealed. It contained, however, many old opponents of the Company and its plans were based upon a determination to ignore the Company's claims. But Simpson was so anxious not to arouse hostile feelings at this time that he helped the mail service until he had convinced himself that it must fail: he reckoned that letters from Red River to Toronto by this route cost £100 each, and he found that they took five times as long as when sent by the American route.

But this was only an additional reason for fearing American ambitions, and in 1858 Sir Edmund Head reported that American attention was turning towards Red River but that Canada would not readily undertake government there as a charge on her own revenues. She would, he thought, assert her rights in the abstract but would object to paying compensation to the Company or to accepting responsibility for civil administration or for military defence.

So much lay behind the mission to London, in the autumn of 1858, of Cartier, Galt and John Ross. Cartier, by origin and political allegiance, was as has been seen unable to think of annexation of Red River and the prairies to Canada; they would outbalance his own Canada East, and he could therefore at best contemplate a new separate province which would join with Canada in a federation. Alexander Galt was a convinced federalist, and had made an enquiry into federation a condition of his joining the ministry. John Ross had been a member of the Ministerialist Party of Canada West, led by Sir Francis Hincks, and was deeply involved in the project of the Grand Trunk Railway from Quebec to Toronto, chartered in 1852-3 with the possibility of adding extensions from Quebec to Rivière du Loup and from Toronto to Canada's western frontier at the St. Clair River.

The scheme for the Grand Trunk had blossomed rapidly with the banking houses of Barings and Glyn Mills involved and with Thomas Baring and George Carr Glyn as members of the London board. John Ross was President, and through the Consolidated Municipal Loan Fund in Canada and through direct loans in Great Britain some seventy-five million dollars were raised and spent on building the railway. Considerable land speculation and much prosperity went with the building of the Grand Trunk, but as the crisis of 1857 brought British investment to an end the railway was in difficulty. In 1855 and again in 1856 government help had been granted, and obviously more was needed. A vast system ran in 1857

from Quebec and Portland to the west, to Sarnia and London. But freights were high, the system was incomplete, Toronto had not been given regular access to the sea-board, and there was every chance that the railway which was already beginning to vitalise Canadian life would plunge into bankruptcy. Taking time off for so important an object, the Canadian premier John A. Macdonald came to London in the summer of 1857 to try to get the imperial government to rescue the Grand Trunk. But though he brought the persuasive lawyer John Rose as his companion, and though he had Governor Sir Edmund Head and Chief Justice Draper in London to help him, he got no promises from the British government. This was despite the fact that Macdonald shifted emphasis away from the western and provincial Grand Trunk project to a revival of interest in projects for an inter-provincial railway in the strategically important eastern provinces. Alongside the plans for a Trunk Route which would open the west for settlement and development were laid proposals for a 'military road' which would unify the diverse British North American provinces. The solution seemed to lie in the development, with British governmental support, of an Intercolonial Railway which would take the traffic on from Quebec to the Atlantic coast at New Brunswick and so would connect the trade of Quebec, and of the Grand Trunk route, as it came into working order, to the Atlantic.

An Intercolonial Railway had been under discussion, and had been seeking British government support, since 1848, and the three points which the Canadian mission was to discuss in England in 1858 were the completion of the Intercolonial Railway, the annexation of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories, and the summoning of a conference to negotiate a federation of the North American provinces. The mission, like that of Macdonald and Rose in the previous year, failed to elicit a guarantee for railway construction, and proposals for a federal government seemed to depend chiefly upon the failure of the two provinces of Canada to rise above petty and often personal differences. Little was therefore achieved in that direction.

For any project either of a federal union of the North American colonies or for a transcontinental railway, however, it had become openly accepted that the Company's territories would present 'an obstruction' which would have to be freed. This, it seemed in 1858, should not be difficult, for some form of interim government, perhaps a Crown Colony, was in accordance with Canadian feeling, with British desire to turn agricultural land to settlement, and with

the Report of the 1857 Committee. Such a solution in itself was quite acceptable to the Company; but not if it was to be accompanied by a demand to put the whole Charter to the test. It was one thing to consent to the surrender of admitted rights and another to volunteer consent to an enquiry to call those rights in question. Bulwer Lytton at the Colonial Office much regretted this attitude, for he thought it time for 'an authoritarian definition of existing claims' and he threatened that if the arbitration of the Judicial Committee were rejected he would take the necessary steps for closing the long controversy and for securing the decision which he thought necessary for the material development of British North America and the requirements of an advancing civilisation.

What those steps would be was not clear, for the Crown could not well challenge the validity of a Charter of which the Crown was quite undoubtedly the author. But Lytton said that, unless the issue were cleared up, a renewal of the Licence for Exclusive Trade would be impossible, and although in 1858 the Company had been told that the licence would be renewed, in January 1859 it was told that it would definitely not be possible to renew the licence. The Company's rights in its chartered territories would, of course, remain until challenged, but beyond the chartered territories the licence would lapse. Since the licence expired in May of that year (1859) and the sudden curtailment of the Company's activities might injure the public interest, the Colonial Office offered a renewal for one year only; but a special Committee-meeting of the Company decided to repeat its letter of 18th July, 1857, to say that the purpose of the licence was to secure the preservation and maintenance of peace in the Indian territories, and to decline the renewal for one year only, since it would merely create uncertainty. 'No Monopoly can be upheld on any ground short of a conviction of its necessity as the best, if not the only, means of accomplishing some exceptional object', said the Committee. If any better means could be devised for keeping the peace and for avoiding the dangers of competition, the only question to be settled was the proper indemnity to be paid to the Company's shareholders. The Company was most ready to cede land at Red River or on the Saskatchewan, immediately or as it was wanted for settlement, on equitable principles, and it would leave those principles to be decided by Commissioners. It was equally ready to help to make separate colonies or to put the territories under the Government of Canada; but the Company could not be a consenting party to any enquiry which would challenge the Charter.

This was a logical answer, and it was consistent with the Company's attitude since colonisation had become a serious issue. But the Colonial Office could not be expected to relish what it called a refusal 'to enter into any amicable negotiation for a fair and equitable decision on the validity or extent of their charter', especially since all the cards had already been played—an appeal to the Law Officers and an invitation to the Canadian government to bring on an action. Canada had again discussed the matter and again refused the initiative. In his quandary Lytton offered a renewal of the licence for two years instead of one, and this also the Company refused. Lytton was getting anxious, for the Indian territories would really need government if the Company suddenly renounced all responsibility and the fur trade was thrown open; he was a bare two months from his end-date, at which the existing licence would expire and he would have to accept responsibility, but he seems never to have given consideration to any positive action. He was, indeed, in some confusion, feeling that the development of British Columbia made it more urgent than ever to connect the two sides of British North America without the 'obstacle interposed by a proprietary jurisdiction', but unable to distinguish the chartered territories from the North-west Territory and the renewal of the licence, which was his immediate concern.

The Company, in contrast, was clear in its knowledge and in its views; and the Company was adamant. It would accept a long renewal, or it would assist in setting up an independent administration for the Indian territories. But it could see no alternative between maintaining the existing system in its former efficiency, or providing a different government, with the means for ensuring a proper administration.

The deadlock lasted through the summer of 1859 and the early months of 1860 as Newcastle replaced Lytton at the Colonial Office and as the urgency of Canada's problems was for the moment submerged beneath the plausibilities which surrounded the Prince of Wales's visit to Canada—a visit on which George Simpson entertained the heir to the throne at his house at Dorval near Lachine, only to be stricken by an apoplectic stroke three days later and to die within the week. The Little Emperor's light had gone out, as Dugald Mactavish wrote, just after he had basked in a final blaze of glory. He, more than any other man, had brought the Company to a pinnacle of power and prosperity based upon knowledge, industry and commercial competence, and he more than any other knew how much weight to attach to the chartered rights and the Licence for

Exclusive Trade in the fur-trade empire which he had built and ruled. For Simpson these privileges had long been merely the means of keeping competition out from the fur lands of the far north. In the south, where settlement was possible and probably inevitable, the chartered rights might well be yielded if they would be replaced by ordered government, and if a fair price could be got; and the old man at the end of his career could foresee the end of the Company as he had known it, and was not dismayed.

But the terms had first to be settled. Newcastle, while accompanying the Prince of Wales on his tour, was acutely aware of the hostility to England which he had sensed in America, and was the more firmly determined to build up a strong confederation in British North America, of which the intermediate provinces would have to be carved out from Rupert's Land. In May 1860, therefore, the Colonial Office reverted to the Company's offer to cede territory for colonisation at Red River or on the Saskatchewan, and warned the Company that the time was coming to take these lands to form a colony. This must be done by the British Parliament; but since the Colonial Office would like to ensure the Company's assent it enclosed the draft bill and suggested that compensation should be settled by arbitration. The draft bill provided for taking over land at Red River, on the Saskatchewan or anywhere else, in five years from the date of enactment, and it proposed a power to create colonies by Letters Patent anywhere within the Company's territories, and to demand land for canal construction and for railways. Compensation would be assessed, and would be due for roads, buildings, bridges and improvements which were taken over, for cattle which could not be moved out, and for loss of the monopoly of trade. Such compensation would be the first charge on revenue to be got from sales of land.

To this the Company replied by requesting that the Company's freehold and fee simple in the lands under discussion should first be recognised in the bill. This was essential, for otherwise the Company would appear to have acquiesced in a denial of those rights. The Committee also thought that a proposal to settle boundaries by Commissioners would be open to abuse unless the Company were given the right to lay its case before the Commissioners, and they thought it would be fairer if the Company received payment before its boundaries were adjusted instead of afterwards, at some remote date, when the lands had been sold to settlers. Newcastle would have none of this; but he still thought it best to try and get the Company's concurrence, and he suggested a discussion.

In the meantime the Colonial Office had also decided to withdraw

from Fort Garry the detachment of Canadian Rifles; no replacement was proposed although Governor Henry Hulse Berens protested that the experiment had been entirely satisfactory. Since the detachment had been brought to the settlement in 1857 the troops had never so far been called on, but Berens expressed his fears that the end of the licence would attract all sorts of adventurers to the settlement, on their way north to try their hand in the fur trade. He offered that the Company would give quarters and rations to the troops, and allowances to the officers, if they might stay. But the troops left Red River on 6th August, 1861, they were at York Factory on 23rd, and they sailed on 30th.

The Company immediately refused to appoint a new Recorder to replace John Bunn, in view of the decision to turn the settlement into a colony. True to its contention throughout, the Company was maintaining that the authority which took over the territory must be responsible for effective government. This was all the more appropriate since Governor Monck reported from Canada a certain confusion on the propriety of establishing government in Red River and on the Saskatchewan—though the Colonial Office had in mind independent colonies at this time, rather than annexation to Canada—and the possibility of an influx of squatters from the United States.

Famine hit the Red River settlers in 1862 as the new Governor of Rupert's Land, Alexander Grant Dallas, came into residence. A former junior partner of Jardine, Matheson & Co. Ltd., he had traded at Shanghai for some years and then had retired and gone to San Francisco in 1854. He had married a daughter of James Douglas, had been made Chief Factor at Victoria, and had differed violently from his father-in-law over the Company's rights in British Columbia and on Vancouver Island. He had resigned from the Committee of the Company, of which he was an active member, on taking up the position of Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land in succession to Simpson, and he came with firm determination to the scene at Red River.

The replacement of Simpson by Dallas was not the only important change in the Company in 1862. The generation which had formed the coalition with the North West Company and which had secured and developed the Licence for Exclusive Trade was passing. Old, knowledgeable, and active, this was a generation which had dominated the Company for forty successful years. But Simpson, above all, was dead; Pelly had gone, and Colvile had died in 1856. Governor John Shepherd lasted but two years. Governor Berens re-

maintained; with thirty years' service on the Committee he knew all the problems, and Edward Ellice brought great knowledge and influence to the Company's service; but something had gone from the Committee. It is most significant that in 1862, at a crisis in its fortunes, for the first time in its history the Company found it necessary to carry on business in an interim manner because there was no quorum present at the Committee meetings which were held every Monday.

But Dallas brought new vigour to the Company's management at Red River. In some ways this was perhaps unfortunate, for Dallas began to organise a party to support the Company. So complaints which might have rumbled on came to a head, to defer and embitter the last phase of the Company's régime. The settlement, as Dallas came to it, had a well-defined American party, and a well-defined Canadian party. As St. Paul had become a rail-head and the American approach became so attractive that even Simpson used it, Americans in their turn found their way to Red River, and congregated round George Emmerling and his hotel. The Canadians seem to have congregated round the store opened by Henry McKenney and his half-brother Dr. John Schultz about a mile from Fort Garry, on the site of the present city of Winnipeg. Canadians and Americans alike were opposed to the Company's rule, the one group advocating annexation to the United States, the other to Canada; and the influence of the Canadians was vastly increased, and their arguments given weight, when in the autumn of 1859 the two young journalists William Buckingham and William Caldwell arrived in the growing settlement with a printing press and began to publish their journal the *Nor'Wester*. Both were English, but they won custom by criticism of the administration, and when within the year Buckingham's place on the paper was taken by James Ross, the Company still found the *Nor'Wester* more than critical. For though James Ross was a son of Alexander Ross, a former officer of the Company, he was no friend of the Company; he had been educated at Toronto University, and he brought to the paper the enthusiasm of youth for liberal forms of government. True, the first issue of the *Nor'Wester* had given a great setback to annexation to Canada by publishing a letter from Isbister in London in which it was stated that Cartier was not in favour of expanding Canada to the west, but the paper nevertheless consistently urged emancipation from the Company and development of the institutions of self-government.

The *Nor'Wester* not only attacked the Council of Assiniboia and claimed representative and responsible government; it also attacked

the Company's territorial claims, and this in a particularly dangerous way, for it printed a statement from Peguis, the old Saulteaux Chief, that he had never sold the land of Red River to Selkirk or to the Company. The Indian claimed that he had taken Selkirk's ammunition and tobacco as an earnest of a bargain yet to be made, not in complete payment for extinction of the Indian title, and his protestations were not new in 1860 when the *Nor'Wester* published them. He had in his time been kindly treated by Simpson and had been given a small pension, but his complaints had been put before the 1857 Committee by the Aborigines' Protection Society. The Indian's claim threatened not only the Company's rights but the existence of the whole colony, for when the settlers read the Indian's protest in the *Nor'Wester* they saw all the titles which had been derived from the Company in jeopardy. The half-breeds then came into the fray with their claims as the first owners of the soil, and Peguis and the other chiefs, fortified by an article in which Donald Gunn had supported the Indian claim, demanded a rent in wheat from the settlers.

The *Nor'Wester* had not only stirred ambitions for self-government in the settlement, it had also made all the settlers uneasy and suspicious about their land-titles, and Dallas soon antagonised this uneasy community by refusing the use of the Company's currency to the free traders at the same time as a strong band of Sioux Indians, fleeing from American soldiers after perpetrating a massacre in Minnesota, took refuge on British territory near the settlement. The Canadian Rifles had gone, and the settlers found a lack of protection added to their other troubles. Dallas took the lead, and the Council of Assiniboia petitioned the British government for troops. In its danger the Council of Assiniboia turned, not to Canada or to America, but to the British home government; and Newcastle at the Colonial Office thrust the burden upon the Company. He refused for a moment to admit that the Company was not responsible for the protection of a territory of which it claimed to be the sole and absolute proprietor. He would only send troops if the Company would pay all expenses, and he strongly advised the enlistment of a local militia.

So the Company found itself as firmly committed as ever to those duties of administration which it had been so ready to pass to some other authority. The transition was not to be quick, or easy, and developments at Red River made the intransigence and the slow and meticulous negotiations of the Colonial Office and the Company all the more regrettable because the old and knowledgeable generation

which had guided the Company during the Simpson régime was losing its hold. Dallas himself was something of an example of this inevitable change, but the situation was completely and suddenly changed when in 1863 the Committee resigned *en bloc*. They had sold their shares in the Company to the newly-formed International Financial Society, thereby depriving themselves of their right to sit as committee-men and giving the Financial Society control of the Company. Ellice, Berens, Matheson, the remaining old names went; of the Committee of seven only Eden Colvile and the very recently elected George Lyall, M.P., continued to serve. It was a different body of men, with different purposes and different ideals, which in 1863 stepped in to handle the tangled but almost-concluded negotiations for handing over the Company's territories.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SOCIETY

The men to whom the Directors of the Company sold their controlling shares in June 1863 had some knowledge of the fur trade, and some interest in it—but not much. Their purpose was to take over the assets of the Company and to develop them in a way which the old Committee had been reluctant to undertake. Despite its interests in the development of transportation, its increasing sales as an ordinary retail trader at Red River, Victoria and elsewhere, and its development of agricultural projects on the Pacific coast, the old Company had remained predominantly a fur-trading company. It was, indeed, as a fur-trading company that it earned its dividends and as a fur-trading company that it valued its assets.

The four per cent. dividends which the Company had maintained in the last years of the struggle with the North West Company and in the early years of the coalition had been stepped up to ten per cent. in 1825, when the lessons of the trade under coalition had been mastered. The first year, 1821–2, had shown a loss which was ascribed to the high prices dictated by the North West tariff, but the second year had shown a profit of £40,000. This represented ten per cent. on a capital of £400,000. It was argued that the uneasy coalition with the McGillivrays and Edward Ellice would be improved if the whole trade were conducted under one combined stock; so the capital of the Company was amalgamated and was increased to £400,000. It was reckoned that this sum was covered by money, goods and effects, to the value of £326,807 3s. 10d. and by £73,192 16s. 2d. as the (obviously fictitious) value of the Company's territories and privileges. McGillivrays and Company were to relinquish their claim to a specified share of profit and were to bring their contribution to the unified concern up to half the real assets (£163,403 11s. 11d.) by a cash payment. The Hudson's Bay Company proprietors were likewise to bring their contribution up to £163,403 11s. 11d., and this entailed a hundred per cent. call on proprietors, the second call in the whole history of the Company. It was a fair enough arrangement, which brought in Selkirk's heirs also, giving them £13,140 of stock. It gave the Company a little ready cash, and it gave the financial coherence which was essential

for that unified control of the Company's trade which was the hallmark of the period.

On the basis of this arrangement the Company was paying dividends on a capital of £400,000 throughout the period 1825 to 1850. In 1850 the capital was raised to £440,000 by a bonus issue of ten per cent., or as Ellice put it 'by profits carried to stock'. In 1852 a further addition of five per cent. was made by this process so that the stock stood at £462,000; and in 1854 the stock was raised to £500,000. The increases were well covered by the assets of the Company, and although they brought little fresh capital the Company was justified in declaring that these were increases in the real stock of the Company, not merely nominal. On this capital of £500,000, dividend and bonus had been worked up to twenty-three per cent. in 1836; the rate dropped to ten per cent. in the troubles of 1837, but was raised to twenty-five per cent. in 1838, dropped down to fifteen per cent. by 1842, and remained at a steady ten per cent. for the next twenty years.

This, the Company maintained, amounted to no more than the ordinary rate of mercantile profit, and the returns to shareholders were halved by the fact that three-quarters of them had bought their holdings at £200 or more for a £100 share. Detractors, however alleged an annual 'revenue' of something like a quarter of a million pounds and net profits of £119,000 in one year on an outlay of £211,000—something over fifty per cent. The Company's accounts, and the methods of the trade, did not lend themselves to this sort of calculation, for the routine of the trade necessitated the lapse of two or three years between outlay on goods and payment from fur sales, and the allocation of overhead expenses was a difficult and lengthy process. But in 1862 the Company's tax return of profits for an average of the previous three years was rendered as £124,578 14s. 3d. This, however, was considerably more than the Company got from furs, for when the Company came to consider a price at which it might sell its chartered rights it decided on £75,000 a year as the net annual income from which the sale-price might be calculated, and Edward Ellice told the 1857 Committee with the most dogmatic assurance that the average annual profits of the Company since 1840 were £65,573 2s. 7d. from the fur trade. He was careful to point out that the Company had other interests besides fur, that it had investments and deposits, and that it was 'a large trading establishment', but the fur trade as a source of the Company's revenue produced £60,000 to £70,000 a year.

The test of this estimate is that it fits in with the shares of the

Chief Factors and Chief Traders. Over the seventeen years, from 1840 to 1857, the average amount distributed under the Deed Poll amounted to £26,229 odd, and this sum properly represents the trader's forty per cent. of a profit of £65,000 odd. Such profits, it is true, were realised upon an annual exportation of something like £60,000 worth of goods, but throughout the Company's history the goods exported to the Bay-side posts had been a comparatively small proportion of the Company's annual running costs, and costs were diminished and apparent profits swollen since the costs of the Factors and Traders were left in the alleged profits instead of being deducted as salaries before profits were declared. Moreover, the capital value of the Company's assets, against which the dividends should properly be set, was nearer to one and a half million pounds than to the half-million at which the stock stood. As a consequence of the 1857 Enquiry the Company explained to the Colonial Office that its assets amounted to £1,265,067 19s. 4d., and as soon as the Company began to set a price upon itself the figure was £1,500,000.

However such figures are taken, it must be accepted that by the 1860's the fur trade was prosperous as it had never been before, although much of the territory from which furs had formerly been got had been settled and the over-all returns in furs had diminished during the half-century. The frontier policy of the Company, and its policy of preservation of the fur-bearing animals, ensured that from the remote northern areas of Rupert's Land came increasing quantities and these, as the total supply of peltry decreased, commanded greater values. So although the advent of the silk hat to replace the beaver worried Simpson and the Committee, that was to some extent offset by the decline in the relative importance of beaver in the fur returns. The average 'share of the profits of the trade', i.e. one eighty-fifth of the forty per cent. of the profits, which was the lot of the Chief Trader, had shown at £308 11s. 7d. a year for the seventeen years up to 1857. For the ten years 1853-62 the average was raised to £466 5s. 6½d.—an average achieved within very considerable fluctuations from the £872 10s. 1d. of 1855 to the £207 8s. 6d. of 1861. For a generation up to 1862, a Chief Factor with two shares of the profits could count on a cash income of between six hundred and a thousand pounds a year, which was a very considerable sum in those days.

Fur sales brought in substantial sums—for example, in 1862, £16,057 in January, £24,031 in March, and then further payments on account of the March sale of £19,642, £18,210, £10,479, £41,116, £1,156 and £2,633 until the September sale began pay-

ments again with £31,933. With such revenue assured, the Committee was able to keep a floating balance at the Bank of England of about £10,000 and to keep substantial sums, sometimes up to about £20,000 but more normally £5,000 or less, at sight or at a week's notice, at a low rate of interest, with their other bankers, Messrs. Curries, and Overend Gurney and Co.

This was, in effect, a prosperous continuation of the financial structure as Sir Bibye Lake had developed it in the first half of the eighteenth century. In addition to its own balances the Company had the savings of its staff to invest, and it allowed interest (normally four per cent.) for wages or shares of the profit of trade left in its hands. Individuals, and combinations of directors, had other interests than fur; Governor Shepherd for example was deeply committed to the East India trade, Simpson and Pelly were engaged in the Baltic timber trade, Colvile's interest in sugar remained with him, and Ellice combined political and financial interests as a former Secretary of the Treasury and M.P. for Coventry might be expected to do. But the Company as such was forced both by inclination and by its constitution to confine its activities to the fur trade and to directly subsidiary branches of commerce. Under the terms of the Deed Poll, as McLoughlin had pointed out, it was not even able to develop the agricultural wealth of its territories except as a source of provisions for the fur trade. For anything further, the Puget's Sound Company had to be called into existence.

It was therefore a prosperous but closely defined and limited trade with which the old board of directors had concerned itself. By contrast, the new board of 1863 continued to include Eden Colvile who had in his time been Governor of Assiniboia and who had behind him a full knowledge of the old régime; but the only other fur-trader properly so called was Curtis Miranda Lampson, an American naturalised in 1848, who had formerly opposed the Company's trade at Mingan and the King's Posts, and whose addition to the board seemed merely a further sign that the fur trade had been sacrificed. When the traders, without explanation, were told that Lampson had been appointed Deputy Governor, their feeling of mistrust was aggravated, and with reason. But though Lampson in reality indicated a determination to revise and develop the fur trade rather than to abandon it, the change in outlook and purpose of the new board seemed obvious. The first reaction to the change in control was a general assumption that the Company would be dominated by the group which had bought control. This, it soon became apparent, was not so, and the new board of directors developed

an outlook and a purpose distinct from those of the purchasing group.

At the centre of the purchasing group, and its motivating genius, stood Edward (later Sir Edward) Watkin. Behind him, though taking no financial interest in the purchase, stood the Duke of Newcastle; and when the transaction was concluded the Committee recorded a minute of the sale to the 'parties introduced to us by the Duke of Newcastle'. Motives and purposes are far from clear, and (as has been pointed out) there is a disappointing lack of first-hand evidence, even in the archives of the Company, where virtually none of the preliminary exchanges remain on record. The chief source of information must be Watkin's own semi-autobiographical book *Canada and the States*, and a fair discount must be made for the suave self-confidence and plausibility of the man.

Brash, assertive and ebullient, Watkin had been engaged on the management and organisation of British railways since 1845, and had acquired valuable experience. His period in British railway administration was that in which the numerous and often rival local lines were being merged into the great trunk routes of the British system. It was a period of amalgamations, large credit transactions, and 'enlarged views', a period exemplified in the career of George Hudson 'The Railway King' whose purpose was to create and maintain a London and York Railway. Hudson epitomised both the vision and the folly of the period; by the end of 1848 he controlled 1,450 of the 5,007 miles of railway then in operation in Britain, and he had directed the expenditure of some thirty millions of pounds. Within a year he had retired in ruin and disgrace, a victim of the habit of 'keeping everything but his accounts'. Hudson's railway kingdom was cracking by the time Watkin began his railway career, and the example was salutary; but something of Hudson's qualities was requisite, and Watkin showed energy, enthusiasm, and a capacity for 'enlarged views' which roused the admiration of Newcastle.

The point upon which the two came together, and upon which Watkin showed his breadth of vision, was a plan for a railway across North America run entirely upon British territory. Watkin had first visited Canada in 1851, a visit in which he hoped to recover from overwork caused by the failure of the London and North Eastern Railway. His visit coincided with a great period of railway enthusiasm in the colony. The heavy expenditure on canals in Canada had meant a late start for railway construction, so that by 1850 there were only about sixty miles of railway working there. But enthusiasm kindled at the thought of an Intercolonial Railway, a route which

would give Canada access to the Atlantic, either by a Quebec-Halifax line or by a more southern route to Portland, Maine. For either route the financial support of the home government would be necessary, and when Joseph Howe had failed to secure this in 1850-1 (on the ground that the southern route would take the line over American territory), these intercolonial proposals, involving the three colonies of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, fell into the back-ground while each colony pursued its own path for a decade.

Canada, under the direction of Francis Hincks as Inspector General, embarked on the construction of the Grand Trunk route to connect Quebec and Montreal with Toronto, and so westwards by a Great Western line to Sarnia, and to the fertile lands north of Toronto by the Northern Railway. Under Hincks' guidance the Canadian legislature made it possible for much of the finance to be raised under guarantee from the colony, and under guarantee from the municipalities for shorter local lines. It was further arranged that the Grand Trunk should lease running rights on to the Atlantic coast over the route of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway (a partly American line which came to the coast at Portland) and the Canadian legislature passed the charter of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada in 1853.

But the Grand Trunk surpassed the bounds, and exceeded alike the loyalties, the interests, and the capacity of Canada. The impressive board of directors included six Canadian ministers and Peter McGill, President of the Bank of Montreal; it also included the great English bankers Thomas Baring and George Carr Glyn, and the contracts for construction were signed with the English firm of Peto, Brassey, Jackson and Betts, who were to act both as constructors and as promoters, selling bonds to raise working capital as required. Most of the capital had to be raised in England, and although the Grand Trunk had behind it the support of the Canadian government and a guarantee for its bonds up to £3,000 (currency) a mile, it relied upon English investors and was virtually controlled from London. So, when difficulties appeared, it was from London that the remedy was sought. In fact, the Grand Trunk was never out of difficulties; within a year its stock was at heavy discount; within another year (by 1855) its funds were exhausted and it could neither continue building nor pay interest on its bonds. An appeal to the Canadian government met enough response to keep things going, but that government had to come to the rescue again in 1856. The missions of 1857 and 1858 to secure support from the British government failed, and by 1860 the railway was virtually bankrupt and

two judgments against the Company were obtained, by A. T. Galt on behalf of the Canadian government, and also by Baring Brothers and Glyn, Mills and Company, on behalf of themselves and the British investors. Financial troubles in England and Europe, the Crimean War, bad harvests, light traffic and heavy costs, had all contributed to the debacle and the English investors suggested the appointment of Edward Watkin as 'Superintending Commissioner with full powers'.

Watkin accepted the appointment and arrived in Canada in August 1861. He had been offered something of a similar post at an early stage, in 1854, and though he had been unable to accept he had set out his views about the Trunk. In 1860 he had written to Baring that the Trunk was 'both too extensive and too expensive for the Canada of today' and had claimed that although sound administration would gradually improve its position no great success could be produced except 'through the extension of the railway communication to the Pacific'.

Ideas of a transcontinental line had long been in the air, and the Hudson's Bay Company had been faced with at least three such proposals, all from men of straw and opposed to the Company. But the idea was not to be lightly discounted; it commanded great support, and the 1857 Report had brought a transcontinental line to the forefront when John Ross gave his opening evidence. Ross had been Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, and Speaker of the Legislative Council in turn, and he spoke as President of the Grand Trunk when he said that a good broad road or a railway ought to be set out before there was any serious talk of taking Red River or any other lands under Canadian administration. He refused to be drawn into saying that the Company's administration would prevent railway construction since it would be hostile to settlement, but he followed up his claim that the Grand Trunk should be extended to Red River by a downright support for further extension to the Pacific. 'You contemplate, then, going across the Rocky Mountains to Vancouver's Island?—Yes, we hope to see it extended there in time.'

In talking of such a transcontinental line Ross and Draper, and many others, were concerning themselves with the widest issues, not merely with creating a line to a freight-paying area. Ross told the Select Committee that such a line seemed to be 'more of an imperial question than a colonial one', and he was envisaging a link between England and the Pacific, with the trade of China and the Far East brought through the new route to Europe. But more limited ambitions were more immediately effective. Gold on the Fraser, and

settlement on Vancouver Island, bore promise of freight, and even nearer at hand was the possibility of opening up the west. The Grand Trunk directors had always hoped that their line might be used by American traffic from the south-west, but this was one of their disappointments, for American lines were cheaper and more attractive. To the north-west, however, there seemed possibilities in which American rivalry would not be a factor. Ross spoke with some hostility of 'certain gentlemen at Toronto very anxious to get up a second North-west Company'. They were not specifically a fur company, but they might turn to anything which promised profitable exploitation of the north-west, and in fact the North West Transportation, Navigation and Railway Company emerged in 1858 with the ill-concealed purpose of opening communications through the Company's territories without regard for the Company's claims. Its attempts to carry mail to Red River soon ended in costly failure, but the North West Transportation Company was only a part of a movement for opening the north-west which aroused considerable support in England and which ultimately succeeded by acquiring ownership of the Company's claims.

There was already in existence in England a substantial group with which the North West Transportation Company had much in common. The Quebec and Halifax Railway Company had for its prime object to provide a route from Canada to the coast; but it co-ordinated many powerful and far-sighted men—Samuel Cunard, George Grenfell Glyn, Charles Fitzwilliam, Sir Allan MacNab and Joseph Nelson, and Viscount Bury. Bury above all was convinced of the practicability, and of the imperial importance, of a railway to the Pacific, and as the English investors in the Grand Trunk began to look to the west as a source of the freight which they needed, and the North West Transportation Company began to seek support in London, he acted the part of an enthusiastic go-between.

The Quebec and Halifax project was a revival of the intercolonial scheme which failed to secure British government support in 1852, but when the British government again refused a grant in 1858 the intercolonial proposals were not dropped but were merged in the larger plan for a transcontinental route, in the hope that government assistance might thereby be stimulated. Bury became a director of the North West Transportation Company, brought it into contact with the London investment house of Robert Benson, and forwarded an appeal to the Treasury for a subsidy on mail to be carried to the Pacific coast, in the hope that a railway would follow on the

mail route. The approach to the Treasury failed, but interest and enthusiasm persisted and English capitalists organised a London directorate for a North West Transit Company (as it was to be called) with which an executive committee in Canada would co-operate.

The re-emergence of the Intercolonial proposals, with hopes of expansion for the Canadian Trunk line to the west and north-west, in 1858-9 roused but little support from Simpson or the Hudson's Bay Company, and though Newcastle as Colonial Secretary was strong in support there seemed little that he could do. He was determined to forestall American ambitions by promoting British settlement across the prairies and by fostering a British railway from coast to coast. But Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Palmerston Cabinet would not commit British funds to such purposes, nor could Canada undertake expenditure either to acquire the lands or to foster the railway. The Company's claims were indeed an obstacle to free action. But not an irremovable obstacle, for at an early stage in the negotiations for a renewal of the Licence for Exclusive Trade Edward Ellice had told Labouchere that the Company would willingly sell all its land and establishments. The solution was simple: 'It is a question of a million of money'. He had said the same to his Canadian friends. The apparently simple solution, however, was obscured by the problems of getting the money required. The home government would not produce it, and although Canada urged that the licence should only be renewed on condition that lands should be released for settlement, the legislature there denied the Company's right to any compensation from Canada and urged the imperial government to challenge the Charter.

Ellice had insisted that the Colonial Secretary should assure himself that an alternative government was available before the Company's authority was undermined. They must be careful not to pull down the old house about their ears, and must ascertain that Canada could really accept the commitment; for there could be no turning back. The realistic wisdom of this advice became clear when Governor Sir Edmund Head forwarded to London the resolutions of the different branches of the Canadian legislature. Head also gave his own view (with which many even of those who wished to see a challenge to the Company's claims would have agreed) that until communications had been opened up and some other form of effective government was actually available, the Company's administration was probably the best expedient for the 'wild portion of the country not set apart for colonisation'.

This was a view which, in their different ways, Labouchere, Bulwer Lytton and Newcastle all shared. Their differences were on the problem of compensation for the land to be annexed, where the money was to come from, how much it was to be, and when it was to be paid. Newcastle's opinions crystallised into his bill, submitted to the Company in 1860, by which the reluctance of Canada to undertake the cost and the responsibility found its logical conclusion in a decision that the lands must be surrendered to the Crown, and new Crown Colonies should be set up. Newcastle's proposals, acceptable enough in themselves, were nevertheless rejected by the Company because they included no compensation for the loss of chartered rights, which were not even fully recognised, and because they allowed the Crown to determine the boundaries of Rupert's Land by executive action. Newcastle was at a standstill; and while the permanent officials at the Colonial Office were tepid in support of his wish to over-ride the Company in order to set up Crown Colonies, the position of Canada with regard to such colonies and with regard to a railway was also far from clear.

Towards the end of 1858 Sir Edmund Head as Governor General had forwarded a joint address from both houses of the Canadian legislature explaining their desire to see the Company's lands opened for settlement, and for a railroad to British Columbia to be opened up by way of Red River and the Saskatchewan. This with the previous Canadian proposals led the Colonial Office to wonder whether Canada as an individual colony was putting forward a claim to extend right across the continent westwards, and the question was submitted to the Law Officers of the Crown. The uncertainty of Canada's intentions or capacity, as of his own ability to get the Company's territories and to set up Crown Colonies, seemed to Newcastle to enhance the possibility of American intervention—a possibility always present in his mind and which the report of gold discoveries on the North Saskatchewan had apparently increased. He was therefore in 1861 open to approaches from the London and Canadian financiers who were committed to the Canadian Grand Trunk Railway and to its plans to solve its troubles by reviving the Intercolonial project and by driving the line westwards to the Pacific.

Watkin, near to the centre of this group, had further clarified and publicised his views in an article in the *Illustrated London News* of February 1861. He was able to quote from the Queen's Speech to Parliament of 1858, with its hope that British Columbia would lead to an unbroken chain of British colonies from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and he pleaded for a railway to the Pacific as the future

highway for the trade of Japan, China, Australia and the whole of the Asiatic Archipelagos. 'Whatever nation possesses that highway, must wield of necessity the commercial sceptre of the world.' The London financiers asked for an interview with Newcastle in June 1861, to seek government support for the Intercolonial project, and when they appointed Watkin to pull the Grand Trunk into shape on their behalf Newcastle discussed this task with Watkin and expressed complete agreement in the need for a transcontinental line. The two differed a little on the position of the Hudson's Bay Company, for the Duke's permanent advisers had persuaded him that large parts of the Company's domains never would be suitable for settlement. But the statesman and the railway magnate were of one mind on the need to complete the Intercolonial line and to reach out towards the Pacific with railways which would be a preliminary necessity to the union of all the provinces and territories into 'one great British America'.

Watkin was back in England again by November 1861, having spent his time in Canada as much in fostering agreement on the Intercolonial proposals as on supervising the Grand Trunk, although he put in a most workmanlike report on the defects of the latter. He returned convinced that in all negotiations with the United States their desire for even more territory was always to be reckoned with, and that there was a clear and important imperial interest at stake. He was also convinced that the salvation of the Grand Trunk could only be achieved by westward extension. Watkin was followed to England by powerful deputations from Canada and the Maritime Provinces, equally anxious to push on the Intercolonial proposals with the financial support of the home government. Eventually agreement with Newcastle was reached on a programme which envisaged that the Intercolonial line must be guaranteed by the home government, that confederation of all the British North American provinces and territories must be pushed on, and that measures must be started to secure a communication to the Pacific coast, in the first instance as a pioneer work by roads and telegraphs; and finally that 'the difficulties arising from the position of the Hudson's Bay Company must be gravely considered with a view to some solution'.

The significant point in this programme was that it tacitly accepted that a railway to the Pacific might prove too expensive, so that the political and strategic advantages would have to be secured by preliminary routes by road and telegraph. Canada's inability to pay for a railway was manifest—otherwise the delegations would

perhaps not have come to London. During the decade just passed, Canada had increased her permanent ways from about sixty miles of track to more than two thousand, she had brought her trunk line from Detroit River to the Atlantic, had added many local lines (not all of them fully justifiable) and had gone far to free herself from dependence on water transport and the consequent stand-still which each winter brought. But costs had been high, freights were still inadequate, and credit was almost exhausted. Grand Trunk shares were at a heavy discount, capital investment in Canada had increased by about a hundred million dollars, railway subsidies had added about thirty-three millions to Canada's public debt, and no further sums could be raised—certainly not for a highly speculative railway.

An imperial guarantee would present equal difficulties, partly because Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer represented the most deliberate and logical aversion from embarking on imperial expenditure, especially when it seemed likely that some of that expenditure would be incurred in compensation for the Hudson's Bay Company. Newcastle did his best to ease the opposition, and so did Watkin and his friends. While Watkin, Howe and others, spoke at meetings in Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester and elsewhere, in an attempt 'to make the Intercolonial Railway a public question', Newcastle secured for them interviews with the Prime Minister and with Gladstone. Of the two Palmerston was by far the more encouraging, for Gladstone was as non-committal as he could be; 'He struck me to be a man who thought spending money, or taking risks, however slight, a crime', wrote the disappointed Watkin.

There seemed very little chance that the money for the Intercolonial line would be guaranteed, still less for the Pacific route. But the 'Trent Affair' of November 1861 brought a very real chance that war might be declared on the United States, and though the Americans gave satisfaction and the affair ended quickly and peacefully it brought Canadian problems to attention; troops and arms were sent out and the Grand Trunk and the Intercolonial came under discussion as railways of potential military value. The delegates knew well where they stood as the Trent Affair came under discussion: 'We had to rely upon the Duke. Our difficulty was with Mr. Gladstone', and Newcastle was ready to do all he could to overcome Gladstone's opposition.

In January 1862, as the Trent Affair neared its climax and as Watkin prepared to go to Canada again, to put the Grand Trunk into warlike trim, the financiers and promoters behind the railway proposals met at the London Tavern and formed themselves into the

British North American Association. The avowed purpose was to spread information on Canada and the Maritime Provinces and to further collaboration between British and British North American capitalists; the immediate object was to dispel the ignorance and prejudice which prevented the British government from supporting the Intercolonial proposals and subsequent development to the Pacific. The Association included Thomas Baring and George Carr Glyn, Robert Benson of the North West Transit Company, and representatives from most of the important banking and investment houses of London; and Newcastle was behind it. The North American Association appointed Watkin as its representative to press the British government to support the Intercolonial line, and while he was in Canada in the early months of 1862 events seemed to add great strength to his case. For tension with the United States continued and further reports of gold on the Saskatchewan seemed to add point to fears of American annexation of the prairies. In March 1862 the Canadian Executive Council proposed that Great Britain should set up a Crown Colony in the Saskatchewan territory.

This the imperial government had taken power to organise in 1859 when the Company's Licence for Exclusive Trade was not renewed; but there was some confusion of thought in the Canadian proposal since the 1859 Bill had reference to lands which came under the Licence for Exclusive Trade whereas the proposal dealt with lands held under the Charter. But the proposal indicated a Canadian move towards federation and towards Newcastle's desire for Crown Colonies rather than for annexation of the prairies to Canada, and it underlined Canada's feeling of urgency together with her unwillingness to commit herself. This was a serious and important aspect of the Canadian approach, based upon a realistic assessment of capacity, and when imperial financial support failed Canadian feeling rallied behind the cheapest method of achieving the immediately necessary results—communication by road and telegraph.

As far back as August 1858, when Governor Head had passed on the resolutions of the Canadian legislature pressing for direct communication to Vancouver Island, he had stressed the cheapness, and the ease of construction, of a telegraph line as against the difficulties and expense of a railway. Other telegraph proposals were in the air—a line round the world which would cross the Bering Strait and reach Europe via Siberia, and an Atlantic Telegraph under discussion (to result in the abortive attempt of 1865 and the successful laying of a submarine cable to Newfoundland in 1866).

It was therefore not surprising that in the impasse of 1862 the

Canadian government should have turned to the idea of a telegraph communication, nor that they should have approached the Hudson's Bay Company, through whose territories a cheap transit route might perhaps be secured. In April 1862 Charles Alleyn, Secretary to the Canadian government, approached Dallas, as the Company's local governor, with the suggestion that Canada should erect a telegraph line up to the Height of Land west of Lake Superior, and the Company should then carry it on across its own territories. Dallas had already held conversations on this project with Cartier, leader of the French Conservative Party in Canada, but he gave the impression that the Company could not negotiate on Alleyn's proposals. For though Dallas shared the view that the Company must soon relinquish the prairies to settlement, the Company had no funds available for such a telegraph scheme, and he also thought that outright purchase of the lands must be achieved, not the partial opening which this scheme would bring while it left the Company to administer the lands. Partial settlement, of maintenance establishments for a road and telegraph, would completely disrupt the fur trade since Red River and the Saskatchewan produced the pemmican upon which the northern posts depended. Dallas thought direct administration by the Crown would prove the only solution, and he replied that he thought the Company would accept equitable terms for the surrender of all the rights which it held under the Charter.

Dallas's answer to Alleyn was in accordance with the Company's accepted views, and he hoped thereby to open negotiations which would lead to a conclusion. In fact the Governor and Committee went further than he in meeting the proposal, for while they protested that much of the soil in their territories offered no inducement to settlers but that settlement on suitable lands was freely arranged, they said the Company would readily acquiesce in the proposal if Imperial, or Canadian, or Columbian needs made it seem desirable. But in fairness to their shareholders and to the fur trade they should not be asked to invest in telegraph construction or in road maintenance. The Governor and Committee then turned to castigate Dallas for pursuing the discussion without referring the matter to them. But in reality Dallas had conceded nothing and the Governor and Committee had conceded almost the whole point.

For it soon became clear that for this scheme also there was little financial support from the Colonial Office, and Newcastle was looking for salvage to piece together. The two points upon which Newcastle fastened were, first that Canada had offered to construct the line westwards to the Height of Land, and second that the Gover-

nor and Committee had indeed refused to undertake construction across their lands, but they had not refused to consider the possibility that someone else should do so, and had said they would acquiesce if it became a matter of state. If some body other than the Company should offer to lease or buy the right to make and maintain the telegraph across the Company's lands, the thing could yet be done.

On 5th July, 1862, a powerful group led by Thomas Baring, and representing both the Grand Trunk interests and the British North American Association (which were closely similar) put to Newcastle a proposal for the formation of just such a company as was needed. Their purpose was to make a route for passenger traffic and for telegraphic communication across the whole width of British North America. They wanted to know if the proposal met government approval, and they suggested that if a government money grant should prove impossible a considerable grant of land might be arranged. One of the signatories was K. D. Hodgson, who was both a director of the Grand Trunk and of the Hudson's Bay Company, and when Newcastle had approved of the idea and had sent the proposal to the Hudson's Bay Company to ask whether the Company would concede the necessary line of territory it was to Hodgson that the Governor and Committee turned for explanation. Hodgson reported that the real object of the signatories (who were all, save one, directors of the Grand Trunk) had been to ask government for a concession of land to complete the Intercolonial Railway, which would connect the Trunk route to the Atlantic coast. The slant westwards, to a route to the Pacific, was apparently the work of Newcastle—and perhaps of Watkin—and Hodgson for one would not have signed had he realised that the proposal would lead to the Company's lands coming into the discussion.

The question had, however, been raised; the Company had been asked whether it would concede the line of territory, and Governor Berens replied that the Company would indeed make the concession, granting as much land, free, as might reasonably be required for effecting the proposed communication. But they would require adequate security that the proposed road and telegraph really were completed. This was not quite what Baring and his group had asked for. They had asked for 'a considerable tract of land in aid to the construction', not the minimum required for the right of way; and since it was Newcastle and the Colonial Office who had turned the enquiry in the direction of the Company they, on receipt of Berens' answer, asked what breadth of tract the Company had in mind. The Company replied that, in ignorance of the plan proposed, and of the

amount of land which would be required, they could not answer such a question. The reply was fair enough, but it reflected the Company's view that Newcastle's real purpose was to secure from the Company a grant of territory which he would then offer to any group which would undertake the making of a railroad. Berens noted that at this stage of the correspondence Newcastle ceased to write of the subscribers to the proposal, and it seemed to be clear that what was under consideration was really a Colonial Office proposal.

These matters rested during September and October 1862, while Watkin again went to Canada on the business of the Grand Trunk, and again returned to England determined to launch the Intercolonial line in order to make the Trunk pay. He had gone out in February and returned in April, had gone out again in May and returned in June, and was now engaged on his third visit of the year. Canadian politics were unpromising, with the defeat of Cartier and the advent of the Sandfield Macdonald ministry precipitated by the legislature's refusal to adopt the expenditure needed for Canadian defence. But Sandfield Macdonald was a friend to the Grand Trunk, and Watkin also revived interest in the Intercolonial line. He was followed to England by an Intercolonial deputation consisting of Joseph Howe from Nova Scotia, Tilley from New Brunswick, and Howland and Sicotte from Canada. As soon as they were assembled in England they 'set to work to carry both the Intercolonial guarantee and the Pacific transit scheme'.

The Hudson's Bay negotiations still seemed full of promise, and Newcastle was trying to work the Company's offer to grant land for a road and telegraph into something tangible. True, Berens noted that in conversations he always asserted that if the Duke wanted a large territory in Saskatchewan he had better buy out the Company, and he tied the Company's offer down to a narrow track from Red River to the Rockies. This amounted to 13,000 square miles of land, and it seemed enough. Blank refusal would have got the Company the name of a 'stop the way Company', and Beren's policy was 'not to impede the speculators in civilization if we are fairly treated and paid for any sacrifice we may make'. But Thomas Baring and the two Glyns (George Carr and his son George Grenfell) were primarily concerned with achieving solvency for the Grand Trunk; they accepted the Intercolonial as a necessary adjunct to that, but they were not fully convinced that extension to the Pacific was necessary for the salvation of the Grand Trunk and they had not intended their proposal to Newcastle to be so taken. Despite urgent letters from Watkin in November, and an attempt to put the

proposals in the light of a concession granted in principle but which could be taken up piece-meal as circumstances warranted, both Thomas Baring and the elder Glyn (George Carr) withdrew their support.

Neither Newcastle nor the Governor and Committee seem to have been immediately aware of these serious defections. Astonishingly, Newcastle seems to have gone through the important subsequent negotiations in ignorance, for when the sale of the Company had been effected he reported in the House of Lords that the sale had been to Thomas Baring and others. More immediately he invited representatives of the Company to discuss with him the proposals of Baring. The interview took place on 18th November, and it then became clear that Newcastle envisaged not merely a grant of transit rights and the minimum track needed for the telegraph, but a large tract of land through the fertile belt of the Company's territory. The suggestion, not unnaturally, proved quite unacceptable and the aged Governor, Berens, retorted that 'If these gentlemen are so patriotic, why don't they buy us out?' The Company's willingness to sell had, after all, been common knowledge for some time, and though the price had formerly been estimated at a million and was now put at a million and a half, nothing new was involved.

The Governor and Committee, however, were still under the illusion that, if anyone should take up their offer to sell, it would be Baring and his group, and they wrote to Newcastle on 21st November to say that they were willing to discuss with Baring either a grant of land or the purchase of the whole of the Company's rights. But Watkin, realising that he would either have to drop the whole project or to find a syndicate which would negotiate for the purchase of the whole of the Company's property and rights, had many anxious discussions with Newcastle as to who the real purchaser should be. As President of the Grand Trunk he was determined to press on despite the defection of Baring, for Newcastle had told him that Gladstone at last approved and the Canadian delegates, evasive though they proved, had said that Canada would guarantee the interest on one-third of the capital required for a Pacific railway, up to a total expenditure of fifty thousand pounds. Moreover, Watkin felt strongly that 'Great Britain should take to the bargain' since the fur trade with its shops, posts and stock, could be sold or leased to a commercial concern for £800,000 or its equivalent in rent and amortisation, and the government would therefore get the chance of buying a territory bigger than Russia in Europe for a mere £700,000. Alternatively, he thought he could sell part of the terri-

tory to the United States for a million pounds, or open it to settlers from the States who would pay fair prices for such land. At base he seems to have had a genuine hope that, once the bargain had been sealed, Newcastle would take over the country as a Crown Colony.

At any rate, Watkin determined to follow up the opening, and to try to negotiate the purchase. With a group of supporters (including two of the Glyns) from the British North American Association, he met the Governor and two Committee-men on 1st December, 1862. The scene was the Court Room in Hudson's Bay House, Fenchurch Street—'dark and dirty. A faded green cloth, old chairs almost black, and a fine portrait of Prince Rupert'. Berens, 'an old man and obstinate', seemed rather overbearing; but his policy was to sell if a proper price could be got, and though he thought nothing could come of it since he knew no company was yet formed to provide the money, in the end he offered his alternative, of a free grant of the minimum land for road and telegraph, or of outright purchase at a million and a half. Logically, but rather surprisingly, Watkin then asked to see the Company's accounts, so that the trade position could be established and a price arranged.

As he tried to tie the Canadian delegates, Howland and Sicotte, to support his Intercolonial and North West Transit schemes and to get government support for these purposes or for an Atlantic and Pacific Transit and Telegraph Company which he was projecting, Watkin kept his negotiations with the Company going, and in March 1863 he was given permission for a limited inspection of the Company's accounts. The accountant, Roberts, was aged about seventy-five, though he seemed ten years older to Watkin; but his son was his active assistant, and the old man remembered back to the early years of the century, so that Watkin was told many strange things. The Company's solicitor, Joseph Maynard of the firm of Maynard, Son & Co., he found helpful and knowledgeable. But the 'accounts' appeared to him to be mere schedules and he boggled at a price of a million and a half pounds when the trade profit for 1862 was only £35,000; this was to ask £300 for each £100 share in the Company at a time when the market price was only £190 and when the price according to the profits earned in 1862 ought to be only about £120.

It was said that 1862 was a bad year, and that furs had since risen in value, but Watkin found several discrepancies in the accounts submitted to him (of which he was not allowed to take copies), and when he had discounted revenue from land sales on Vancouver Island, had taken out a large sum claimed from the American

government and had put in the Fenchurch Street premises at the realistic figure of £60,000, he reckoned that the Company had assets worth something over a million pounds, not a million and a half. In addition to £200,870 which the Company held and invested on behalf of its employees—a significantly large sum, which Watkin rightly did not include as an asset—the Company held £82,850 of investments, its balance of stock, trade credits, and shipping were reckoned to be worth £544,970, the house in Fenchurch Street £60,000 and the forts and posts £333,000. Minor items brought the total to £1,081,000, to which the Company would have added a further round million pounds for its general land, mineral and other rights, including its claims against the American government. These, however, were items which seemed to Watkin to depend for their value on the unpredictable factors of the behaviour of Canada, of the United States and of Parliament, so he discounted them heavily and turned to work out a price based upon current earnings, to arrive at the conclusion that the price asked required explanation.

The current year, 1862, was a favourable one from Watkin's point of view, for profits had been small. But the Company's valuation of its assets was conservative, always provided that the claim to chartered rights over the territories would stand the test; and the price was less than the valuation. So Governor Berens would not budge though he offered to supply any further information which was needed. Watkin was by the end of April getting strong support from Newcastle for his schemes for the Intercolonial Railway and for his North West Transit Company, and the realisation of his plans seemed at hand if only he could secure control of the Company's lands. But since the previous August Newcastle had been clear that as far as the government was concerned 'purchase of this great territory is just now impracticable'. Watkin pretended surprise at this and ascribed the veto to the illness of the Duke and 'some secret difficulty which he never enlightened me upon'. But he can hardly have thought that the government would sponsor such expenditure, and he must have been equally clear that neither Thomas Baring nor George Carr Glyn were behind him. Yet he continued the negotiations and ultimately accepted the Company's price.

The terms were agreed by the Committee of the Company on 19th May, 1863, after Watkin had been given further access to the accounts and had, apparently, resolved his doubts. Edward Ellice begged the Governor to accept the points made by Watkin, and the solicitors began to draw up the agreement on 22nd May. But Berens insisted on his full price, and he insisted on payment in cash! The

one point which Watkin appeared to have won was the condition that the Governor and Committee should guarantee that the purchasers, at £300 for each share or £1,500,000 if the total stock of £500,000 changed hands, should secure control of a majority holding, so that they could be sure of appointing their own board of directors. This Berens and the Committee could promise on the strength of their own holdings, and Watkin had the Company's assets in his control, if he could raise the money!

On this Berens would not relent. The old man was conducting the difficult negotiation almost alone, confident that he knew the minds of his fellows and writing to them (especially to Edward Ellice and his son) from time to time but, as he said 'not oppressed by the assistance of my colleagues'. He seems to have nursed the strongest suspicions both of the Duke and of Watkin. The Duke, he thought, had 'far more extended views than prudence and sound judgement can comprehend'. Canada also 'would turn us out tomorrow if she could do so'. Yet the Duke would steal a march if he could (according to Berens, and he seems to have been right in this); he was anxious 'to get rid of us', and he was encouraging certain parties to 'move vigorously' against the Company. The 'certain parties' were, of course, Watkin and his supporters, and of these Berens was so unsure that throughout the negotiations he insisted that the outcome was quite uncertain, and would remain so until the legal transfer was signed and sealed.

Some little confusion is caused because Berens was writing of Watkin and his friends as a 'transit Company' which was 'determined to try and annihilate us' while he was also discussing another 'Transit Company' which was a 'cruel swindle' designed only to take money from emigrants by promises to get them to British Columbia by way of the Saskatchewan. This British Columbia Overland Transit Company got so far as to strand a group of emigrants at St. Paul, Minnesota, and Berens was instrumental in getting questions asked about it in Parliament and in exposing it. But he did not really confuse it with Watkin; that was merely a slip in his correspondence. Through the early summer months of 1863, he continued to arrange matters with Watkin, always insisting that the outcome was unpredictable. In February 1863 Berens had written that he still did not even know distinctly who the parties were with whom he was negotiating.

This was true enough, for until the last moment Watkin himself did not know who would put up the money. While the lawyers translated the agreed terms into a formal document he still had to

find his backers. Thomas Baring and George Carr Glyn were out, and so was the British government. Watkin's alternatives were to draw up a list of fifteen persons, each of whom would take a 'line' of a hundred thousand pounds; or he might approach the International Financial Society. Since Berens insisted on cash, the International Financial Society had to be called in, for private investors would require time to raise such sums; in fact Watkin's two chief supporters now turned out to be George Grenfell Glyn and Robert Benson, both of whom supported application to the International Financial Society, in which both were interested.

The International Financial Society came very appropriately to hand for this affair—so appropriately that it has often been assumed that it was founded expressly for the purpose. The purchase of the Company's shares may well have been in the minds of the promoters as they formed the Society, but there is no evidence to show a direct connection. The International Financial Society had been founded only on 11th May, 1863 (while some of its promoters were engaged on the final negotiations with the Company) and its object was 'the undertaking, assisting, and participating in financial, commercial, and industrial operations, both in England and abroad, and both singly and in connection with other persons, firms, companies and corporations'. Its directors were partners in a number of merchant-banking houses in the City—Junius S. Morgan of George Peabody and Co., Herman Stern of Stern Brothers, and representatives of the firms of Heath, Huth, Frühling and Goschen, and Dobree. The Society was closely tied to the *Crédit Mobilier* of France, and each of these two companies owned a third interest in the shares of the other. In a comparatively short career the International Financial Society floated a loan for a Danubian railway, financed the Lemberg-Czernowitz Railway, an Anglo-Italian Bank, an Italian Land Company and a Land Company for Mauritius; and it took a major part in the conversion of the entire public debt of Mexico. In its first fortnight of operation the Society successfully carried through the purchase of the Hudson's Bay Company's shares and the flotation of shares for the Egyptian Commercial and Trading Company. The Society operated smoothly and with superb confidence, and there seems to have been no reluctance or misgiving about the Hudson's Bay deal, for which the Society appointed Richard Potter as its representative. The business reached a swift conclusion; on 15th June Berens officially informed Newcastle that the deal was complete, and on 18th June he at last told Dallas that he might tell the Chief Factors and Traders that the sale was accomplished.

But the intervention of the International Financial Society had introduced a complication. Newcastle in the House of Lords announced that the group of railway and telegraph promoters had, 'through the International Financial Society' become the purchasers of the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. This was far from being the case, not only because Thomas Baring and the elder Glyn had withdrawn but also because it was not the Company as such which had been sold. Herein lies the explanation of Berens' attitude, and of his insistence that he could give no credit in the sale. The shares must be taken up as presented, and paid for over the counter, £300 for each £100 share, for individual proprietors were to sell, not the Company. All save two of the old Committee sold theirs, and so disqualified themselves from membership of the Committee while giving powerful majority-holdings to the purchasers.

The old Governor and Committee had not consulted the other stockholders, and from the nature of the transaction, which was an agreement that they as individuals would sell their holdings, there was no compulsion on them to do so. But there were almost three hundred proprietors, of whom the Committee were only a few important members, and they secured the condition that each proprietor should be offered the same price. Accordingly on 15th June, 1863, as the bargain was completed, they circularised all proprietors, telling them of their opportunity and informing them that the purpose of the new directorate (not yet elected) was to extend the Company's operations to objects not heretofore contemplated. Officially the offer of £300 a share only stood for a week, and there were some complaints and some laggards; but the transfers came through remarkably quickly, and by early in July the International Financial Society had got hold of all save about £5,000 worth of the 'old stock' by that date. Some of the stockholders who were not so anxious to accept the bargain wrote to ask what would be their position if they held on. But the situation was not sufficiently clear for them to be given a firm answer. First the places on the Committee and in the Governorship must be filled. Newcastle pressed strongly that Sir Edmund Head, formerly Governor General of Canada, should be made Governor and this was easily achieved; the rest of the Committee consisted of two members of the old Committee, Eden Colville and George Lyall, M.P. (who had only joined the previous year), 'for the, expected, value of their experience' as Watkin somewhat sarcastically noted, and five nominees of the International Financial Society.

The last meeting of the old Committee was held on 30th June,

1863. The new Committee first met on 2nd July. But neither Edward Watkin nor the International Financial Society had taken over the Hudson's Bay Company, for the new men, said their leader Curtis Miranda Lampson who was elected Deputy Governor, had had nothing to do with the bargain with the 'old Hudson's Bay Company', they were not 'in the secret', and they were not responsible for it.

The new Committee were busy men, bringing the Company immediately into touch with the active world of international finance and politics. While the two old members of the Committee held only the minimum of £250 stock each the others, Governor Sir Edmund Head, Curtis Miranda Lampson, Daniel Meinertzhagen of Huth and Company, James Hodgson of Finlay, Hodgson and Company, John Schröder of J. H. Schröder and Company and Richard Potter, each held to the value of £1,800. These figures were for the old stock of the Company (soon to be increased fourfold) so that the directors' holdings were considerable. But the Committee were too busy to give close and constant attention to the Company's affairs, and there was no *quorum* available at two Committee meetings of August 1863, the Committee was adjourned over the month of September, and when it got together again on the eve of the annual General Court in November it decided to meet at two o'clock in the afternoons and to divide the fines for non-attendance among those present—significant signs of busy lives and of a less dedicated approach than the Company was used to.

But although no *quorum* could always be got, an active inner circle was there to draft out the important business. On 25th August, for example, no *quorum* was available but it was decided to call a Special Committee Meeting on 28th, at which the capital structure of the Company could be raised. The resolutions accepted were that the capital of the Company should stand at £2,000,000, and that this sum should be made up of £500,000 stock as at 31st May, 1863, of £300,000 profit carried to capital at 60 per cent. on that £500,000, and of £1,200,000 additional stock at 150 per cent. on the £800,000 made up by the first two items. The details are important; the serious decision was to raise the stock from £500,000 not to the purchase price of £1,500,000 but to £2,000,000, and to do this by selling additional stock to the value of £1,200,000. The decision was not an arbitrary one by a Committee usurping authority, for this was no more than the technical implementation of a resolve taken in principle early in July, as the new Committee was appointed. It had then been decided, furthermore, that the By-laws of the Company which

had governed its business since 1749 should be repealed, and that the stock of the Company should be issued to the public in units of £20 each.

This arrangement, of course, entailed a profit of half a million pounds on the deal, and from this arose two problems. In the first place the decision appeared to those of the old proprietors who had kept their shares to have given to the International Financial Society a power to sell shares in the Company (to the tune of half a million pounds) without regard to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company as such. This was true, and was a view strongly put by R. Hodgson; but it was a policy adopted by the General Court and its elected Committee, and Hodgson himself bought twenty 'certificates' of five shares each—a holding of £2,000 in the new stock. The second problem to some extent mitigated this apparent gift of easy profit, for the International Financial Society agreed that within six months of their making the new issue they would pay over £200,000 of this profit to the Hudson's Bay Company, and that if the whole issue was smoothly and easily taken up by the public they would pay over a further £25,000, this sum to be reduced by £1,000 for each £10,000 of the new stock which was not taken up. In fact this arrangement worked successfully, the stock went reasonably well (and proved a sound investment to those who got in at par) and by January 1864 the scrip was virtually all sold, and by the payment of £200,000 the Company was able to increase its assets to that amount in ready money.

But in the early stages of the take-over, before the public had begun to subscribe, the Company had to help the purchase through by a loan. The new board lent £118,993 17s. 2d. to the International Financial Society early in July, and though the loan was repaid with interest before the month was out, the transaction was in its way something of an evasion of Berens' condition that the shares must be paid for 'over the counter'. But, if it had not been contemplated that some of the cash to buy out the proprietors would be lent by the Company itself, the speedy repayment shows that this was merely an expedient to overcome a temporary shortage of cash, and it enabled the proprietors to get their money.

The speed with which this loan was repaid, and with which the new stock was placed and the Company's share of the half-million profit was paid over, should not lead to the conclusion that the purchase turned out easy for the International Financial Society. Almost as soon as the first loan was repaid the Society got its hands once more on the (almost equivalent) sum of £100,000 which it had

deposited at Glyn, Mills and Company, in the joint names of Berens, K. D. Hodgson, George Carr Glyn and Robert Heath, a mixed body of the old and the new; and at a later date Lampson explained that the need to pay over the Company's £200,000 within six months of the issue of the prospectus of the 'new company' had put such pressure upon the Society that it had been forced to sell some of the stock at a discount and so had cut its profits. Its difficulties certainly made the Society anxious to avoid payment to the Company of the extra £25,000 which had been promised if the share flotation went off smoothly and swiftly. But this was only agreed upon as a compromise solution when another difficulty arose.

Among the assets of the 'old Company' was the fact that £12,500 of its stock of £500,000 was in the Committee's hands, unsold. Since the Company as such was not a party to the agreement with Watkin or the International Financial Society, and the agreement stopped short at an arrangement that the Committee should sell their own shares, and should encourage other holders to do the same, there was no reason to conclude that this £12,500 of unissued stock would pass to the International Society. Unless the Society paid the Company for this stock it would remain the property of the Company. So at least argued Joseph Maynard, the Company's solicitor, who in August 1863 said that the members of the old Committee never suspected that they were handing over the unissued stock without payment, nor that payment for it was meant to be included in the £200,000 which the Society duly handed over as the Company's share of the profit on the transaction. He had, indeed, not been present at the meeting of 25th June, 1863, at which the decision was made about the price which the International Society would get from the public, and he did not know the details of the arrangement by which the Company was to get its £200,000. But he was certain that the old Committee were originally not parties to the proposal that the stock should be quadrupled, and equally certain that any stock which was acquired must be paid for.

This was a view which the International Financial Society found it hard to accept. Their notion was that, somehow, they had bought the Company as such rather than the individual shares which might be offered to them. Early in August 1863 Robert Heath as Chairman of the International Society raised this claim only to have it rebutted by the new Committee of the Company. Eventually on 10th November a small sub-committee of the new directors agreed that the International Financial Society should give up its claim to the unissued £12,500 of old stock (which would have been worth

£50,000 of the new stock) on condition that the Company renounced any claim to the £25,000 which it was to receive if the new stock was quickly and easily taken up. The Company, however, also agreed not to put the unissued stock upon the market without previous consultation. This also was a condition to which weight was attached, for it was alleged that one reason why the new shares did not go as well as was hoped was that it was well known in the City that Robert Heath had a thousand shares (£20,000) and might flood the market with them whenever he thought fit. The other new shareholders thought it unlikely that confidence in the stock would rise unless this possibility was removed by an assurance that these shares would either be held by Heath or would only be sold to existing shareholders.

The raising of such a point by shareholders would have been almost unthinkable under the old Committee. But the new stockholders were as different and as active as the new Committee. They had bought their stock as a result of a prospectus which the old Committee had agreed with the International Society after a great deal of discussion. They had been told in the prospectus that the southern district of the Company's lands would be opened to European colonisation under a liberal and systematic scheme for which the Company's existing posts and staff would provide a nucleus and an efficient administrative machine, and that outlying estates and valuable farms would be realised where the land was not required for the use of the Company; mining grants would also be disposed of. The shareholders made it clear that this was what they now expected—realisation of the potential value of the Company's territories rather than concentration upon the fur trade.

With these ideas in mind the shareholders showed themselves, if anything, more active even than the new Committee. At their first meeting, at the London Tavern in November 1863, they drove Head to a threat of resignation from the Governorship by their demand for an audit of the Company's accounts by two of themselves. A compromise was finally reached on the basis of audit by one professional accountant and one representative of the shareholders, for which task Watkin was appointed. On the whole they had little knowledge of the fur trade, but they had a lively sense that they had bought shares in a concern which ought to realise large capital increments, and it was to capital values and developments that they devoted most of their attention, as when they protested against the 'immense block' of buildings in Fenchurch Street standing at only £18,000 in the accounts.

Watkin was nominated to represent the shareholders in these negotiations, and though he states that a place on the board was reserved for him, this does not appear to have been so. He had in fact gone to Canada again early in June 1863, to push forward the main objective of the new Committee, the development of communications through the Company's territories. The prospectus had publicised the fact that 'preliminary arrangements for the accomplishment of these objects have been made through Her Majesty's Government (subject to the Final sanction of the Colonies) based upon a 5 per cent. guarantee from the Governments of Canada, British Columbia, and Vancouver Island'. In addition, it was said, the British government had promised grants of Crown lands in territories crossed by the proposed telegraph line, and prospective buyers were told that one of the first objects of the Company would be to consider the best means for carrying out this important work, either by the Company or with the Company's aid and sanction.

Such statements were fully warranted, for in May the Colonial Office had sent to the Company the proposals of the Atlantic and Pacific Transit and Telegraph Company (Watkin's project) and the Company had then agreed to grant the land necessary for construction and for operation. But that project was soon superseded by the greater project of realising the values of the Company's lands. For the Pacific Transit and Telegraph Company did not control the Hudson's Bay Company; nor did Edward Watkin. True, in the summer months of 1863 Watkin, who was already in Canada, was asked by Governor Head to go to Red River and to report on the state and condition of the settlement and its prospects, as also on the possibility of beginning operations for a telegraph line across the southern district of Rupert's Land. But interest in the telegraph, and particularly in Watkin's proposals for that arrangement, was not exclusive. The Company was invited, in July, to inspect 'An Economic System of Iron Permanent Way' which was held to be ideal for a railway to unite the east and west coasts of America, as proposed by the Duke of Newcastle, and in August the British North America Association submitted to the Treasury proposals for a line of mail steamers between British Columbia and Panama which might well have offered an alternative route for mail contracts for the Pacific coast. The vast proposals of P. McD. Collins, for a telegraph round the world, also got considerable attention, for Collins secured support from the American government for a line from American territory to Bering Strait and he had agreed with the Russian government that they would build from European Russia across northern

Asia to the mouth of the Amur River and that he would then connect on to the American system. He approached the Company, as did the American Embassy in London, about the possibility of continuing his proposed line across the Company's territories.

The telegraph was very much in mind, but Watkin had many rivals, and the Company itself was contemplating action. Dallas advised the Board not to rush into any agreement but to survey the territory with a view to building the line itself, from Fort Garry to Jasper House, and the Company began negotiations for the purchase of about £22,000 worth of telegraph equipment. Their most celebrated explorer John Rae, who had acquired a great and deserved reputation by his journeys and by his discovery of the remains of Sir John Franklin, had retired from the service since 1853. But he had just completed a survey in Greenland for a telegraph from England to America by way of the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland, and he was re-engaged to make a survey in 1864 from Red River to the Pacific.

This cut right across Watkin's arrangements. He had agreed with Dallas that the best route lay through Jasper House and Edmonton, had also agreed that the portion through the Company's lands ought to be constructed by the Company. He was assured that guarantees could be got from Canada, and probably from British Columbia. So far Watkin was acting as the new Committee wished. But he then took it upon himself to make agreements with Mr. O. S. Wood, the American manager of the Montreal Telegraph Company. Wood was to superintend the erection of the telegraph between Fort Garry and Jasper House, and the Montreal Telegraph Company was to build from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to make a through line with existing connections to Sault Ste. Marie; the Company was to build from Sault Ste. Marie to Fort Garry provided Canada would help, and it was to build on from Jasper to Fort Langley provided British Columbia would help.

Watkin appeared almost to have completed the necessary arrangements for his line under the Company's auspices, and to have tied it into the American system by an agreement that an American line from St. Paul to Pembina should there meet a line to be built from Fort Garry by the Company. But Dallas and Governor Head and the Committee, were not prepared to go so far or so fast, and by the middle of August 1863 Watkin had been forced to realise that they were 'not prepared to act with the energy and preciseness I required', and was forced to abandon his arrangements and to leave the telegraph for the time being.

Watkin could barely conceal his anger at the failure of the project which, as he so rightly said, had brought about the installation of the new board of directors, and had even been mentioned in the prospectus which had been issued before the new shares were sold. But the Governor and Committee were almost equally disappointed with him—not so much because he had usurped authority in making provisional arrangements with Wood, and ordering materials, but because they had asked him to make a report on the prospects of the Company and of Red River Settlement, and he had made only such a report as he might have written if he had never left London. In fact Watkin never went to Red River, and this he excused because the two men who were supposed to accompany him, Captains Glyn and Synge, could not make the journey.

Although he got no further inland than Montreal, Watkin met Dallas there and discussed most aspects of the Company's trade with him. The two men formed the greatest respect for each other, and they agreed on a policy for the Company's major development even though they disagreed over the telegraph. Dallas, following Simpson's line that the fur trade should sell out to facilitate settlement, was more eager to dispose of the lands than was Watkin. The latter took courage from the accounts of the trade in British Columbia since the opening of that colony for settlement and argued that there was no desperate hurry and that the Company could continue to make profits from the fur trade while holding out for good terms from the Crown. At the same time Watkin agreed that it would do harm to over-state the Company's case, and that the territorial problem should be pressed on, since any delay, which gave the appearance of continuing the old Committee's attitude, would disappoint the new proprietors, and would bring complication with Canada and in Parliament. Watkin and Dallas therefore agreed that the Company's best policy would be to advocate the founding of a Crown Colony at Red River so as to make settlement possible.

The fur trade, nevertheless, seemed a reasonably secure and prosperous business, and Dallas and Watkin set to work to propound suggestions which would make it more profitable. The abuses and nepotism of the last years of the Simpson régime came in for attention, and they were agreed on a judicious weeding out of the establishments. They were agreed, too, that London should relax its tight control, should allow the accounts to be made up in the country, and should allow the overseas Governor far more initiative. The Deed Poll, however, was the main point upon which they concentrated, for Watkin found it difficult to reconcile the traders' right to

a share of profit with the reorganisation which the Company needed. This was partly because the whole system seemed clumsy and outworn, partly because it gave something like partnership rights to 'winterers' who were not in favour of the new directors or of their purposes.

Watkin was quite justified in thinking that the fur-traders looked on the new management with suspicion. This was largely due to Lampson's election as Deputy Governor, for they regarded him as a great and often successful rival; but there were deeper reasons for his conclusion that the fur-traders were going to require tactful handling. Much mistrust had been roused because the old Committee had been reluctant to divulge arrangements which might possibly fail. Taking their stand upon the fact that they were making an arrangement to sell their personal holdings in the Company (with an implicit domination of the stockholders) the old Committee were acting within their rights and the new Committee obtained the opinion of their legal advisers that in so doing their predecessors were observing the rules of the Company and that the changes effected were brought about by individual sales and not by any corporate act of the Company. So there could be no doubt of the legality of their acts, or that they thereby disqualified themselves from office, or that the new Committee was properly elected, despite the clauses which admitted the Chief Traders and Chief Factors to a share in the management of the trade.

This, however, still left the new Committee to work out some means of securing the loyalty of the traders. Berens might regret the parting of the ways, since his great-grandfather had sat on the Committee as early as 1775, but the Company's employees regretted it far more poignantly. While the staff of the London office asked for consideration, and the older members hoped that gratuities and retirement pensions might be secured for them, the best expression of the fur traders' reaction is probably that penned by J. R. Clare, Chief Factor at York. He wrote of the 'revolution that has taken place among the Stockholders', and he recorded the feeling that the trade had 'been handed over wholesale and without the slightest hint upon the point, to parties who will inaugurate a policy very different from that by which we have heretofore been guided'.

Some change was accepted as almost inevitable, and the traders hoped that the new management would confine the fur trade to the more profitable areas and 'remove the incubus from which the trade has suffered so long'. They hoped that the plain districts, most of the Montreal Department, and the Columbia Department, which

between them had greatly swollen the capital required and so 'eaten us up with interest', might be curbed. But in addition (perhaps not quite logically) they also hoped that the new Committee would find employment for the mass of the Company's employees. Though they feared that the fur trade would now be made secondary to other schemes, they reckoned it would probably be kept as profitable as possible. But they had at one time hoped that the necessary changes would be carried through by the old stockholders in conjunction with the officers. They had even gone so far as to write to the old Committee, when rumours of the pending sale had reached them, to suggest that the reformation should be carried out by the co-operation of the fur-traders, who had the knowledge and the enthusiasm required. The move brought them a sharp rebuff from Berens, who replied that no transfer was likely.

The completion of the sale therefore left the new Committee faced with the irreconcilable advice (from Alexander Christie) that the best way to win the loyalty of the officers would be to make as few changes as possible, and from Watkin and Dallas that drastic changes, even in the Deed Poll, were needed. Watkin and Dallas reckoned that the existing system could be commuted by buying out the expectations of retired interests for £114,500. Since many of the existing officers would be re-engaged, they would not be entitled to full commutation, and the sum involved would be much less than this maximum. The Company could well afford such a commutation, for it would have at its disposal the share of four-tenths of the fur-traders' profits which was distributed to traders, and it could also revise its list of officers so as to save £14,000 a year. The significant economy in personnel was to be the substitution of four 'Councillors' in place of the sixteen Chief Factors, and all officers were to be given fixed (and modest) salaries instead of their shares in the profits, though Watkin and Dallas also suggested that they might be given an active interest in the trade by receiving an allocation of shares.

This was a paper approach to a problem which involved personalities, loyalties, and suspicions. Against the warning that unless the new Committee acted firmly and liberally there was a possibility that the traders would raise capital and would form a Fur Trade Company of their own, Watkin's mission and his report were not auspicious. Though the new Committee, meeting in November 1863, assured the fur traders that it would carry on the business as before and would respect all the rights which had accrued with scrupulous good faith and liberality, and promised the same to the

London staff, there was considerable leeway to be recovered. For example, the meeting which thus offered reassurance to the traders went on to consider the prospects of the fur trade, and then to decide that the telegraph was practicable and desirable if Canada and British Columbia would accept reasonable terms, that the Company's territories ought to be surveyed to ascertain their mineral resources, that Dallas should conduct a review of the posts and of the trade, and concluded that the Company hoped to meet the wishes of Her Majesty's Government and the spirit of the times by assisting in the spread of settlement and the development of communications. But when the Chief Factors met in Council in the following April they regretted that they had been given no information on the telegraph or postal route, or on the general opening of the country for settlement, or negotiations with government for disposing of the chartered rights, relieving the Company of the burdens of governmental administration or placing the government of the country on a more permanent and better footing. They were alarmed, too, at a suggestion that the Company's business should be extended in the Western Department, for they had inherited their predecessors' suspicions that the Columbia must be a losing business, and as a body they were as firmly convinced as ever that the essential core of the Hudson's Bay Company's business was Hudson Bay.

The new ideas and the new Committee were slowly turning away from the Bay and towards the prairies. Simpson had moved in this direction, and Dallas followed him, with experiments in re-organising the Company's transport system to mark the change of emphasis. Dallas was not satisfied with Simpson's experiment at getting goods up to Red River from St. Paul, and he tried for improvement by getting the Grand Trunk Railway to ship direct from Sarnia to Superior City, from whence the goods would go via Georgetown to Fort Garry. As against this the fur trade pinned its faith to York Fort still. The one change which Alexander Christie had thought the new Committee ought to make was to cease bringing in the outfits by way of St. Paul. For York Fort was to him the natural way to and from the settlement.

Too much could easily be made of the difference, in simple terms, of geographical outlook between the new Committee and the old fur-traders. The traders were not so conservative as to turn their backs on the southern districts and approaches, and under Simpson's lead they had been trying for half a century to take advantage of those areas. Nor was the new Committee so neglectful of the assets

which it had bought as to despise the north and north-west; far from it, the fur trade must still be the main source of immediate revenue. But yet the changes of 1863 marked a change of outlook. Under the machinations on behalf of the Grand Trunk, the Intercolonial and the Transcontinental Railway, implicit in the government's changing plans for opening the prairies by Crown Colonies or, alternatively, by new provinces of Canada, and explicit in Canada's claims to the lands opened for settlement, lay a reversal of the Company's basic position.

In its origins, in its quarrels with the French, and in its re-organisation of the trade after 1821, the Company had often stated, and always assumed, that 'Rupert's Land is not a part of Canada'. Steam navigation on the lakes and rivers, improvements in roads and in river-courses, and above all railway development, had made this no longer true of the southern parts of Rupert's Land. The old Committee had recognised the fact. The new Committee was determined to exploit the change as fully as possible; that was the real meaning of the changes of 1863. The new Committee's development of an interest in furs, its vindication of the Company's independence of Watkin, of the telegraph, of the Grand Trunk and all railways, of the International Financial Society and of the Canadian and home governments alike were important enough signs that the Company had come through the events of 1863 as a coherent and powerful business entity. Most of the shares had changed hands and the financial structure had been revolutionised. But the interests of the Company had not been subordinated to any external interests; they had, however, been placed in the hands of men whose first object was to realise the values of the southern parts of Rupert's Land rather than to manage a trade to the north.

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CHAPTER XXX

THE DEED OF SURRENDER

In view of the express objects of the new Committee, and of Sir Edmund Head's career as Governor-General of Canada before Newcastle had pushed him forward to be Governor of the Company, it was inevitable that discussions with the Colonial Office should take on a new urgency after the old Committee had moved out. Agitation among the settlers at Red River ensured that there should not even be a pause in the discussions while the new Committee took stock of the situation—and indeed this was scarcely necessary, for the new Committee and their Governor knew what they were at.

The immediate cause of the trouble in the settlement was that a party of Sioux Indians who had massacred some American settlers in Minnesota was encamped out of the reach of American troops on the Assiniboine above Fort Garry. As when the American authorities ran into Indian wars in the west, the Company was faced with a dangerous alternative; either it could afford asylum to the Indians and incur American hostility, or it could drive them back across the border and undertake a great deal of trouble and danger in the process. On the whole, the attitude of the Company, and of its officers was that they stood benevolently neutral towards the Indians and that much of the trouble (which they contrasted with their own happy relations) was due to the Americans themselves. The danger seemed to lie in American ambition rather than in Indian lawlessness, and the Hudson's Bay men were always afraid that such incidents would be used as excuses to extend the American frontier. In May 1862, as the withdrawal of the detachment of Canadian Rifles was under debate, the Company had made a claim for a frontier defence force, to keep out both Indians and Americans and as a proof of the British determination to defend the country and to preserve law and order.

American ambitions were ill concealed and well known. The great increases in military and naval strength which the American Civil War had necessitated, and the determined policy which that war revealed, gave reasonable cause for Watkin, and his friends in England and in Canada, to call attention to the amazing and unprecedented growth of the military power of their neighbours. It was

certainly accepted that local American officials might on occasions be more indiscreet than policy demanded and that each incident did not necessarily reveal a deep American purpose; for example, the Company survived an attempt to declare that Fort William was trading on American territory. But, policy aside, the American frontier was a danger and an expense to the Company. The insecurity of the route from St. Paul to Fort Garry was a serious commercial risk of which the Company had to take account (the damage to goods incurred in onward transit from St. Paul, by ox-teams on 'what can only be courtesy be called roads' was an additional argument in the Grand Trunk Railway debate) and the Company was forced to send a duplicate outfit by way of York Fort in 1863 because of the uneasy state of the American territories.

The days had gone when the Company hoped to use troops at Red River to maintain its authority and to frighten the private traders; the 1857 Report had made it quite clear that the private trader was fully established there and was accepted by the Company. Yet when the Sioux came, and the American authorities demanded their surrender, there were those among the settlers who regarded a request for troops as just another move in the Company's policy of perpetuating its authority. Resentment was focused on the Council of Assiniboia as much as on the Company, for the Council was regarded as the tool of the Company, 'nominated by a few Fur-merchants some thousands of miles away'. When Dallas and the Council of Assiniboia framed a petition for military protection and the petition was sent to the *Nor'Wester* to be printed, James Ross, as editor, suppressed this official plea and published instead a petition which was alleged to represent the desires of the mass of the settlers. Going far beyond a request for troops, the printed petition asked for a complete new régime, to replace the Company, to secure protection, and to ensure justice as between man and man.

Much of this was no more than a local expression of the general debate on the colony. But it took extra point from the allegations that the Company's government was ineffective and that it opposed colonisation; and James Ross was not only an editor of the *Nor'Wester* but also a sheriff of Assiniboia and Governor of the Jail there. The Council, led by William Mactavish, decided that Ross was acting in a way incompatible with his holding of these offices, and when Bishop Taché also supported the charges against him he was, by unanimous vote, deprived of his appointments. Thereupon Ross embarked on a vigorous campaign of public meetings and outspoken editorials, claiming that the whole colony was dissatisfied

with the Company. In this he represented the extremists only; moderate settlers, and the *métis* under Louis Riel, dissociated themselves and maintained that the support for 'the people's petition' was largely bogus. They maintained that the great public meeting which was alleged to have given strong support to that petition had been attended only by Ross and his co-editor and that only a score of people knew anything about the petition before it was published, while Dallas said that Ross had been bribed to publish it.

The 'people's petition', bogus or not, was to have been taken to England by Ross himself, but funds ran out and the emissary chosen was Sandford Fleming, an engineer of high character and ability, whose later career was clouded by accusations of waste and incompetence in building the Canadian Pacific Railway but who in 1863 stood high in reputation and who had just been appointed as surveyor for the Intercolonial Railway. He was acceptable to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Great Britain, and was much attracted by the way in which the 'people's petition' asked among other things that the colony should be linked by railroad and telegraph to a system which would run from coast to coast. This, of course, was a theme which ran through the discussions of the period, and there was no basic opposition from the Company, though there were inevitable differences as to the rights and terms involved. It was to discuss such problems that Watkin was in Canada in the early months of 1863 as a quasi-emissary from the Company, but whereas Watkin was engaged on efforts to make an arrangement by which the Company would receive reasonable minimum terms, and communications would be opened up, Fleming became attached to the Canadian interest. He was easily aligned against the Company and he easily fell into co-operation with Howland, Sicotte and the Canadian politicians who had so exasperated Watkin and Newcastle by refusing to share in the costs of defence and of transportation. As he took the petition to London in August 1863, Fleming was closeted with Howland in Quebec, preparing suggestions for the purchase of the Company's rights, claiming first that the Company should 'come down in their pretensions to what their possessory rights are really worth'.

The old Committee had not yet sold their control of the Company in April 1863, as Fleming took the petition to London, and Watkin's interests at this stage are not clear. Probably the idea of buying enough of the Company's rights to enable communications to be opened up was uppermost in his mind and he would have accepted

the complaints against Company rule as part of a general campaign for the spread westwards of railways which would lead to British settlement. The old Committee could not shift their emphasis from the absolute need for defence forces. In February 1863 Newcastle was told of the visit of the Sioux and of the difficulties which would probably arise, and was warned that other tribes might join the Sioux, that the Americans were ill prepared, and that the whole frontier might blow up—this came from an American report. The Company had already taken action when the Governor-General of Canada, urged by reports of American fears retailed by the British minister at Washington, asked that the Indians should be stinted in supplies and in ammunition. Yet it was an explosive situation, and while Sandford Fleming secured access to Monck as Governor-General, and then to Newcastle as Colonial Secretary, with his highly dubious petition, the Company itself, in August 1863, moved (not for the first time) in the same direction. Having received a full report from Dallas, the Committee resolved 'that the time has come when, in the opinion of this Committee, it is expedient that the authority, executive and judicial, over the Red River Settlement and the South Western portion of Rupert's Land should be vested in officers deriving such authority directly from the Crown and exercising it in the name of Her Majesty'. Sir Edmund Head put the Company's views to Newcastle, and it was made clear (if it had ever been in doubt) that the Company under its new Committee, as under its old, would welcome the establishment of effective government at Red River. It protested against the duties of government without the necessary force, and its conditions for transfer were, as ever, that a new form of government should be effective, and that the Company's rights should be taken at a fair valuation.

Dallas, in the meantime, was given complete discretion to decide whether to raise a volunteer defence force or not. But as the summer of 1863 wore on, and Watkin came again to Canada to consult with Dallas about reorganising the Company after the sale, the Sioux drifted off and the immediate danger seemed to lie with the settlers rather than with Americans or Indians. Government in the settlement was almost at a dead-lock, and Dallas found as much difficulty in controlling his friends as his enemies. There were few genuine malcontents, and little by way of an actual grievance. But, with Ross and the *Nor'Wester* to provoke clamour, the mere cry of 'the Company' was enough to cause trouble. Dallas was convinced (as was Watkin) that whatever the rights or wrongs of Company rule—and both maintained that it was fair and easy—it was in itself indefen-

sible since it was rule by a Company whose profits depended in part on the settlement.

So far was the London Committee from intransigent insistence on its rights, and so anxious to convince government that the situation was untenable without effective force, that in October 1863 the posts at Fort William, Sault Ste. Marie, and Lake St. John were abandoned. Dallas protested, and the Committee yielded so far as to permit a representative for specific duties at Sault Ste. Marie. But this closing of posts was a substantial concession, and the representative's duties were closely defined; he was not given any freedom of action as an agent. At the same time, Head was instructed to approach the Colonial Office about the transfer of the Company's territorial rights. He was particularly told to broach the problem as one in which the Company was negotiating with the imperial government, not with the government of Canada, for the first (and probably difficult) step in any such negotiation would be to secure that the Queen's government accepted the obligation to enforce the Company's rights. This was sound legal strategy, and any effort to negotiate directly with the Canadian government would probably come to grief, as so many previous negotiations had done, because the Canadians would deny the validity of the rights which they wanted to purchase.

Head was *persona grata* at the Colonial Office, and his move was met by a request that the Company should make a proposition. To this Head, disclaiming all mere commercial interest, suggested that in the first place a Crown Colony should be set up at Red River without affecting the Company's territorial claims. He quoted the 1857 Report to show that ownership of the land was the basis for all other claims, and he claimed that the Company had preserved peace and good will on one side of the frontier when savage hatred raged on the other side. He asserted that the Company could still manage its own people and the Indians, but that royal government had become necessary for the settlers. There seemed, however, no reason to assume that royal government was incompatible with the Company's ownership of its lands, or that settlement had in any way impaired the Company's claims to its lands.

This was opening negotiations from basic principles with a vengeance! But Head's suggestion was not so strange if it is considered that the colony which he had in mind was to contain considerable areas to which the Company laid no claim and that the Company would merely be one large landowner within the colony. He suggested that the colony should run from the American border to the

North Branch of the Saskatchewan, eastwards towards Lake Superior until it met the frontier of Canada (wherever that might lie) and that its northern frontier should either be the Saskatchewan or a line from the Rockies to Edmonton and Cumberland and thence to Lake Winnipeg and on to the Canadian frontier somewhere north of Lake Superior or Lake Huron. This was a proposal which far exceeded the bounds of Assiniboia; and if Assiniboia was required to be sold Head suggested that the Company should be paid the price for which it had re-purchased that colony from Selkirk in 1834—£80,000—without prejudice to a later discussion and settlement of mining rights. Alternatively Head suggested that the Company might keep the fee-simple of half the lands if it were given the right to make and to operate a telegraph, were secured in the possession of a tract a mile wide along a road to be built beside the telegraph, were secured in the payment of interest on the cost of the road and telegraph, and were given a one-third royalty of all minerals.

The Company was not standing in the way of prairie settlement, for the colony which Head proposed included all the lands which had ever been described as fit for settlement. But Newcastle could do nothing. Apart from the minor debating point that the price paid to Selkirk for Assiniboia was unacceptable since it was part of the negotiations to end rivalry with the North West Company (which it was not), he rejected the whole of Head's proposal as an approach to the home government rather than to Canada. For any 'compensation' from the Treasury was out of the question politically 'having reference to the position of the Company and the views on Colonial expenditure which are prevalent in and out of the Legislature'. Newcastle's use of the word 'compensation' instead of 'payment' or 'price' is interesting, for thereby he evaded the implication that the territorial rights were so definitely established that they could have been purchased, although the Company might perhaps have been 'compensated' for their loss.

Though he was wary on this nice point, Newcastle's real trouble (for he was seriously anxious to establish a colony) was to find the money. He was not merely empirical in his approach, for he had in him enough of the Colonial Reformer to insist that in any undeveloped country the whole progress of a colony depended on the liberal and prudent disposal of its lands. So Head's suggestion was quite unacceptable both because of the political difficulties and because of the basic theory involved. The further suggestion that the Company might keep parts of its lands was also ruled out, as likely to produce administrative troubles and political uneasiness. Colonists

of Anglo-Saxon race, said Newcastle, would grudge the Company its land-revenues.

His logic was leading Newcastle to the conclusion that, since the Company's land rights must be bought but the Treasury would not purchase, Canada would not negotiate, and he wanted a Crown Colony for which Canada could not be expected to provide the money, then the new colony itself must be the purchaser. He proposed that the Company should surrender its territories, within limits, to the Crown and should then be paid a shilling an acre as the land was sold by the government. In addition (for rumours of gold on the Saskatchewan were in the air and were one of the reasons for fearing an American influx) Newcastle proposed that the Company should be paid a quarter of the money derived from export dues on gold or on leases for gold-mining. The gold revenue was to cease when the Company had been paid £100,000, the land revenue when it had reached £150,000 or when fifty years had elapsed. So Newcastle's solution was a post-dated payment from the colony to the Company with a top limit of a quarter of a million pounds.

The offer was accompanied by a warning that Canada was liable to claim that she had succeeded to the claims of France and owned all the land which had belonged to the French colony in 1763. Such a warning did nothing except to cloud the issue, for Head seized upon this point and, for the moment, left the main issues in order to show Newcastle that the Canadians had made such a claim before the 1857 Committee and that the Law Officers had then made it clear that it could only be substantiated at law, by the consent of the Company. The Company would indeed consent to an action on this limited issue, and would defend its claims; but it would not initiate such an action; and since Canada also steadfastly refused to initiate the action, her claims meant nothing.

This exchange of shots took the question into the late spring of 1864. By that time the Sioux were back at Fort Garry again, and although Dallas refused to be alarmed he reported that some individual settlers had appealed across the border for the protection of American troops, and he feared that he might eventually have to call on them. By early April, however, he had refused the proffered American help against the Sioux but had realised that this might encourage other tribes to assume that the Company would stand between them and the Americans, and had sent a message to the chiefs on the Missouri urging them to make their peace with the United States. Then came stronger pressure; the Sioux had horses and equipment which they were accused of having stolen, and the

officers in command of the American troops demanded that they should be handed over for trial and punishment. Dallas demurred, and one of the Indians was arrested at the gate of Fort Pembina, half a mile north of the frontier. The settlers were uneasy at the way in which the Sioux were settling on the White Horse Plain, and at the possibility of a clash between the Sioux and the Saulteaux. In their fear and bewilderment the settlers might well turn to the States. They had sent a petition to the imperial government asking for protection, the Canadian Rifles had been withdrawn and the Company had been told to protect the settlers as well as its own servants. If the American press should claim that the Company was protecting outlaws and thieves, and exposing the settlers to Indian depredations, Dallas feared the consequences. So, while the Colonial Office took an officially correct line and said that Dallas should observe the extradition treaties for returning accused persons to American soil, he took the more practical step of allowing American troops across the frontier, to secure their prisoners and to depart.

This incident revealed a strong desire to shew that the Company could not protect settlers without governmental support. There was some divergence of views between Dallas and the Committee, for Dallas was convinced that 'with the government of the country the territorial right should also revert to the Crown' whereas Head wanted to negotiate in the first instance for a government to be set up irrespective of the transfer of land. But this was no more than a difference of approach. There was a common insistence that if the government wished to diminish the Company's authority it must provide a workable alternative, and this point of view was emphasised as the consequences of the end of the Licence for Exclusive Trade were realised. Whereas in 1862 the Chief Factors and Chief Traders had decided to cut off all demands for brandy and for whisky (leaving open the question of the allowances for officers' personal use), in 1863 they had accepted that the Saskatchewan District would probably have to revert to the use of ardent spirits and that Swan River would probably do likewise. The Governor and Committee complained to Newcastle that this was the foreseeable result of the end of the Licence for Exclusive Trade and of the advent of independent traders, whether English or American.

This was the greatest evil of a competitive fur trade, but the evil was not confined to Red River, and the Company itself was not without its critics. In British Columbia the new colonial government was unable to suppress or control the traffic in spirits; much came up the coast as raw alcohol and was then 'blended' to pass as rum or

whisky. Salt water, camphor, creosote and even sulphuric acid, were added to give taste and strength and Fort Simpson, for example, was reported to be in a constant drunken riot and to be the scene of several murders. Though the Committee instructed all servants to repress the trade, and constant appeals were made to government, which sent men-of-war to the coast to stop smuggling of spirits, the logic of the competitive trade was such that the Company's men were not only accused of evading the restrictions but they even petitioned the colonial government to allow open sales to the Indians, on the ground that an unenforceable law should be abandoned. South of Red River, the Americans alleged that British half-breeds sold spirits to the Indians of the Upper Missouri and the Company's men in their turn claimed that this liquor was entirely of American origin and originally came from St. Paul. It all added to the conviction that a commercial corporation could only be saddled with extra-commercial duties if it were in a highly privileged position, and that if privileges were withdrawn then effective government must be organised.

There was nothing new in this, save perhaps in the circumstances of 1864 in which the arguments were deployed all over again. For Newcastle had resigned his office, from ill-health, in April 1864 and had been succeeded by Edward Cardwell. The interim position, at which negotiations had stuck when Newcastle handed over, was that the Colonial Office was in some sort accepting the Canadian argument by claiming that if the Charter were, for the sake of argument, accepted as valid, it only gave to the Company lands which were not in the possession of any Christian power in 1670. This would exclude any lands which the French then owned, or which the French owned in 1763, and the Colonial Office therefore could not include such lands in the proposed payment of a shilling an acre. Then, having stated the extreme case which might be made against the Company, the Colonial Office offered as a compromise that it should regard the Canadian claim as groundless but yet should exempt from the payment of a shilling an acre all lands which might be granted to Canada eastward of a line running through Lake Winnipeg to Lake of the Woods. This was plain horse-coping, an attempt to make the best bargain whatever the rights or wrongs involved; and it met the response it deserved, for instead of a quarter million Head asked a full million pounds—which was a good price considering that the existing proprietors had bought out the old concern complete for a million and a half. Even this was a hedged offer, since the Company suggested that either the time-limit of

fifty years or the top-limit on money should be abandoned, and then made a series of terms to prevent a smart move by the government and to give the Company a continuous interest in the territory. Payment for land sold was not to be circumvented by the colonial government making free grants, and the Company asked that it should keep all its posts and stations, and six thousand acres round each of them, save at Red River. All lots of land surveyed and occupied by the Company should also be reserved, and for every 50,000 acres sold 5,000 should be reserved.

The position of the telegraph was to be safeguarded, and since the Company would have to make its own arrangements with the American line through Minnesota to Pembina if (as seemed likely) Canada refused to build a line to Rainy Lake, and since the Company would itself have to cede the land in the first instance, Head suggested a concession of five square miles of land for each mile of telegraph, instead of one square mile as had been suggested. This was an amendment which had been approved by Newcastle before he handed over; but it would obviously give the Company a vastly greater stake in the most likely line of land development, along the line chosen for the telegraph and perhaps the subsequent railway.

Head also advocated that the home government must guarantee the Company against discriminatory taxation by the colonial government. The colonial government must also undertake all public charges, even for the Church and for education. These were issues, parallel to that of the sale of spirits, on which the Company had long been charged with neglect and indifference, and on which it had long protested that it had no express public duty laid upon it but that it had voluntarily answered the claims of conscience more than adequately. The Company's relations with the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions had filled many pages of the Report of the 1857 Commission. The Company had never followed an active and effective policy in Christianising and educating the Indians, for even in the evangelical phase when Benjamin Harrison and Nicholas Garry were on the Committee Simpson had commanded in the field, and Simpson's views were that an educated Indian was good for nothing and (later) 'that all denominations are advancing too fast for the physical resources of the country and too much in a spirit of rivalry'. He was against what he called a 'collision of Creeds', and the Company under his lead had, on the whole, confined itself to grants of transport and facilities. But individuals were more enthusiastic, and so were the assembled Councils. The Church of St. John at York Factory was completed in 1858, a missionary was sent

up to Churchill in 1862, and as the Protestant Cathedral at Red River had its bells sent out free of charge by the Company, the Roman Catholic Cathedral (which had been burned down in 1861, and rebuilt) asked for the same concession. The Company found itself regarded as the wealthy patron of a living would be regarded in England, and in general it accepted the position. Among other things it administered and supplemented the Leith Fund, a fund of £10,000, half of the fortune which Chief Factor James Leith had amassed in the fur trade, left for the furtherance of Protestant missionary work, with the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Company as two of the trustees. The Company in 1864 was rightly anxious to make it clear that it must disavow responsibility for religious and educational costs, as for other public charges, when it had divested itself of its territorial claims; so Head proposed that the Company should continue to administer the Leith Fund but should not support the Protestant Bishop of Rupert's Land in any other way (it had hitherto doubled the income from the Leith Fund, paying a contribution of £300 a year for the Bishop's salary) and should not be held responsible for any other public charges.

Head was offering terms to the imperial government, which was negotiating the purchase for a projected Crown Colony which had not yet been formed. Except as a threat on the Company's flank, Canada was out of the negotiations, reluctant to buy the territorial rights and anxious to see them challenged. This Newcastle had accepted, and indeed he had been anxious to see an independent Crown Colony rather than an extension of Canadian rule; for like Watkin he did not believe that Canada could afford a purchase of the territories, nor did he want her to do so. Cardwell, however, was not so fixed in his views, and in rejecting Head's suggested terms he announced that he intended to consult both the Treasury (who would foot the bill if a Crown Colony was contemplated) and the Governor-General (who would put the problems of cost and of a possible extension of jurisdiction to the Canadian authorities).

The reversion, from Newcastle's marked preference for Crown Colonies to Cardwell's consultation of Canada, was well-timed. Even on the particular, and apparently acceptable, issue of the telegraph, negotiations had stuck and the Canadian Executive Council had declined Newcastle's proposal that although the building of a road had been dropped and the telegraph stood alone, Canada should stand by the agreement to pay interest at 4 per cent. on half the sum involved in construction up to a top limit of £10,000 a year and should connect up the telegraph by a line running to Lake Superior.

The Canadians thought they should accept these responsibilities only if the road also were built, to open up 'the fertile valleys and plains of the Great North West' to settlers. Watkin had explained in Canada that the building of the telegraph would involve construction of a series of posts and of a route for mail and passengers across the British portion of North America. But this was something recognisably different from a road, open to settlers and capable of bringing their produce to market. The Company was indeed ready to go ahead. But 'if Canada backs out of the promise to assist the telegraph' Head could not anticipate what action the Company would take.

The attitude of the Canadian government had been a great obstacle to any settlement at the end of the Newcastle régime. Watkin had assured himself that Sandfield Macdonald favoured a solution by means of a Crown Colony which would later join in a federation with Canada and the other British provinces. Just beneath the surface lay the great issue of Canada's attitude towards a federation of all the British North American colonies, and this was an issue into which the problems of railway and telegraph communications, and of the constitutional status of the new territory, entered very largely. The same political uneasiness which prevented the Sandfield Macdonald ministry from making a clear bid to buy the territorial rights prevented it also from a courageous, or even clear, policy on federation. So the Maritime Provinces reluctantly began to move towards a legislative union for themselves, independent of Canada. Their separate legislatures adopted resolutions for the appointment of delegates to consider such a union, early in 1864. The conservative ministry in Canada led by Taché and John A. Macdonald, which had replaced Sandfield Macdonald in Canada in March 1864, was neither strong enough nor convinced enough to step in and lead this movement with a clear Canadian bid for federation. But by their side was George Brown, with an increasing awareness that his ambition for increasing the English balance in Upper Canada could best be fulfilled within the framework of a federal constitution. So the recommendation that solution to Canada's problems should be sought in a federative system, applied either to Canada alone, or to the whole British North American provinces, came as the Taché-Macdonald ministry fell, in June 1864.

A common desire to achieve a federal constitution therefore made it possible for a coalition ministry to be formed by the Grits and the Conservatives, and though party allegiances and personal loyalties made such a coalition reluctant to accept a completely federal

programme it was accepted as policy that a bill should be introduced to give the two Canadas a federal constitution, and that provision should also be made for the Maritime Provinces and the North-west Territory to join such a federation. Representatives should also be sent to the Maritimes and to England, to negotiate for this purpose. The 'great object of the coalition' was federation, and the first move was to some extent dictated by the knowledge that the Maritime Provinces were proceeding by themselves but that they would welcome Canadian delegates to a conference which they had called for September 1864. With D'Arcy McGee as a strong political exponent and with Sandford Fleming in the fullest co-operation on behalf of the Intercolonial Railway, a goodwill tour of over a hundred members of the Canadian legislature and press was arranged through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and when the delegates from the Maritime Provinces met at Charlottetown in September 1864 they adjourned their business until the Canadian delegation could join them. Then, in an atmosphere of the utmost goodwill, they unanimously agreed that if equitable terms could be agreed upon 'Confederation of all the British North American colonies would be highly advantageous to all the provinces'.

From such a declaration of faith to agreement on the details of a federal constitution was a long journey, and the business was adjourned to a further conference, to be held at Quebec, while goodwill was confirmed and mutual understanding was strengthened in a series of visits and receptions. Even the Upper Canada Liberals returned with a conviction of the value of the Maritime Provinces to a federal union, and when the Quebec Conference met on 10th October, 1864, it was in a mood such as had not been seen before.

As Canada began to turn towards a federal solution for her constitutional, military, and economic problems Cardwell turned once more to Canada, particularly concerned to achieve a firm government for Red River and other settled areas. But the Canadian Executive Council, when it could agree on a reply, in November, was looking further afield. The growth of British Columbia and the possibilities of a railway communication with the Pacific, together with emphasis on American immigration, had brought a feeling that Canada should become the highway for immigration. For this the first step, leading ultimately to a federation, must be the extinction of the Company's claims to the soil and to exclusive trade. 'It is not to be entertained for a moment that half a Continent should continue to be shut off from the world on the strength of a parchment title however good.' The extinction of title, however, must be

carried out by the English government, and the Canadians proposed to leave these negotiations entirely to the English, saying that when the title had been extinguished or absorbed they would then be ready to talk about opening the lands for settlement and administration, and to discuss the costs of constructing communications, irrespective of the decision to make the territory a Crown Colony or to put it under Canadian administration.

In view of the very real possibility that the territories might not fall to Canada but might be made into separate (or perhaps federated) Crown Colonies, this was a sensible and realistic approach, and it had the great merit that it did not gratuitously challenge the Company's claims. Head, on behalf of the Company, was equally sensible, replying that the Company was willing to open up the country for immigration, but that it was not a necessary consequence that the fur trade should be sacrificed. He was anxious to give the land a cash value, in the interests of the shareholders; and the indications were that it was indeed valuable since reports on the climate were better than had been expected, the soil of Red River and the Saskatchewan was pronounced rich, and immigrants seemed ready to move in as the empty lands of Minnesota filled up. The Company was ready to sell most of the land under discussion; and the correspondence rested with the Colonial Office, who should make the next move. Yet when the Charlottetown Conference had led on to the Quebec Conference and it became increasingly probable that any decision would have to be based on the widest geographical terms and on a federal solution, the Company thought it worth while to re-state its terms on 7th December, 1864.

The territory was now assumed to run from British Columbia in the west to the Canadian boundary in the east. On the north it was to end at a line along the North Branch of the Saskatchewan, down to Lake Winnipeg, then to the mouth of Winnipeg River and so along to the Canadian boundary at the Height of Land. On the south the boundary was to be the American frontier, or any British lands which were not included in the Company's lands. These vast territories the Committee would advise the shareholders to sell, with mineral rights, for a million pounds sterling on condition that there should be no discriminatory taxes and that the Company would retain its right to trade without any exclusive privileges. Lands which the Company had acquired in Canada should be confirmed to it, and within the territory to be sold the Company should retain its posts and a reasonable area round each, while all lands which had already been sold to settlers at Red River must be confirmed to them. The

Company would also hand over to the Canadian government the materials for the telegraph on payment of costs and expenses incurred. Finally, the Company would require a guarantee in that the transaction must be covered by British Act of Parliament.

Talk of the telegraph, and of the Company's willingness to sell the materials, was not empty, for John Rae got back to England in December 1864, having travelled during the summer from Red River up to the Rockies and then over the Yellowhead pass (i.e. by Tete Jaune's cache) and so down the Fraser River to New Westminster. He reported that it would be perfectly easy to build a telegraph and a road for mail-transport by this route. In the meantime government support had been rallied in opposition to a proposal to grant concessions to an American company for a line from Vancouver Island to Canada, the Company had protested its willingness to build from Pembina or Rainy Lake to New Westminster (leaving Canada to complete the link to Rainy Lake), and the wire and insulators were being assembled by direct shipment to York or to British Columbia, or by transit on the Mississippi to Red River. The government's assurance of support and assistance was still necessary but it seemed to the Company that all should be ready for construction to begin in the spring of 1865.

The great Quebec Conference of October 1864, to discuss North American federation, could not well prove the end of the matter, for many details remained to be settled. But it resulted in resolutions which made the end certain. The 'Fathers of Confederation' accepted the conclusion that a federal union should be formed. A strict legislative union was ruled out, but it was accepted that within the federal constitutional the residual powers should lie with the central government and not with the provinces. The Conference found difficulty in allocating membership of the federal upper chamber, and in agreeing on financial clauses which would secure that the federal government should assume provincial debts within limits. But there seemed little difficulty in agreeing that the federal government should take responsibility for the construction of an Intercolonial Railway. This was the condition upon which the Maritime Provinces found a federal union acceptable; Canada in her turn required that the federation should sanction westward development also, with the development of communications which would open up the North-west Territories.

It was to require more than two years to translate the resolutions of the Quebec Conference into the British North America Act, but this was not because the Colonial Office was at all reluctant. There

was a certain amount of opposition shown by the Liberals of Lower Canada, but in February and March 1865, both Houses of the Canadian legislature adopted an address asking the imperial government to pass laws embodying the Quebec Resolutions. There was no attempt to appeal to the people by either a plebiscite or an election, but the Legislature's assumption of responsibility went without question. Canada had accepted federation. In Nova Scotia, however, Joseph Howe, the veteran statesman of responsible government, was in opposition to Tupper, and in spite of his previous work for federation and for the Intercolonial Railway he worked against the adoption of the resolutions, so that Tupper delayed until April 1866. Even then he did not bring forward an address in support of the Quebec Resolutions, but only a motion for the appointment of delegates to London to 'arrange with the Imperial government a scheme of union which will effectually insure just provision for the rights and interests of the Province'. In New Brunswick also opposition was powerful, largely stirred by resentment at the proposed railway policy, and there the question of support for the Quebec Resolutions was made the subject of a general election and an anti-union government took control.

George Brown had come straight from the Quebec Conference to London, to make sure that the federal proposals would be well received. There he found no opposition: in fact he was quite alarmed at the 'manifest desire in almost every quarter that, ere long, the British American colonies should shift for themselves'. British politicians and British officials were not the stumbling blocks. In Canada Lord Monck was urging John A. Macdonald to support the resolutions and the address of the Legislature, while Lieutenant-Governor Gordon of New Brunswick was cured of his opposition to union on a visit to England and Lieutenant-Governor MacDonnell of Nova Scotia was replaced by a more sympathetic representative of the Crown. But it was July 1866 before the Maritime Provinces sent their representatives to London, and November before a Canadian delegation joined them there.

The Canadians had indeed sent over a delegation in 1865, but it had accomplished nothing, and in the meantime George Brown had left the Canadian ministry. These machinations meant that over two years were to elapse during which the Company was left with the conviction that its territories must be taken over as part of the formation of a federal union, but in which the federal union refused to emerge and accept (or pay for) the transfer. George Brown, on his visit to London, had done nothing to bringing together the two ends

of the problem, for he had always regarded the Company's claims as inadmissible and he did not now change his ground. He rejected the value which the Company put upon its lands, and he disavowed any idea that Canada should contribute towards payment. After a brief interlude, Brown had returned to London in April 1865 as a member of a delegation charged to discuss federation, defence, the Reciprocity Treaty, and the North-west Territory among other things. The other members were Macdonald himself, Cartier and Galt. Their purpose was to negotiate with the imperial government rather than direct with the Company, and the papers on their discussions were placed before Parliament on 19th June, 1865.

Out of the talks emerged an agreement that both the Canadian government and that of the United Kingdom were prepared, subject to the consent of the respective parliaments, to arrange for the transfer of the North-west Territory to Canada. This, of course, was a complete change from the Newcastle policy of creating Crown Colonies, independent of Canada. It might have been regarded as a move in which Canada was increasing her weight in the federal union and was stealing a march upon the Maritime Provinces if the Maritimes had been seriously interested in the North-west or even firmly committed to federation at this time. It was certainly a move taken against the advice of the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office, Frederic Rogers, but it was a move in which the Canadians found an ally in Gladstone. Having reached agreement with the government on the important principle of annexation to Canada, the Canadians agreed to negotiate with the Company on the condition that any indemnity which might be agreed should be paid by a loan which Canada should raise with an imperial guarantee.

The Company was fully informed of these developments, but was reluctant to accept the implications and was affronted at the procedure adopted. Head protested against George Brown publishing portions of the correspondence which passed, and asked that it should be published *in toto*, and in July 1865 he told a General Court of the Company that the prospect of a federal union of British North America made a great difference to the situation. He knew that it was agreed that the imperial government should guarantee the loan which would pay the indemnity, and he had that very day received a letter informing him that the Canadian and imperial governments were prepared to negotiate. But Cardwell noted that negotiations ended at this point, at which the Canadians had not even begun a formal approach to the Company; and at the end of November Head told the shareholders that he had still had no direct contact with

the Canadian government and that he was still waiting for their offer.

No offer came; the Canadians had their own domestic troubles with the ending of the Reciprocity Treaty, the death of their Prime Minister, Étienne Taché, and the resignation of George Brown. But in January 1866 the Company received an enquiry from Alexander McEwen which raised important issues. McEwen wanted to know whether the Company would sell its lands to an Anglo-American syndicate who would develop the area on lines similar to those used in the United States for opening up new lands and organising them into Territories and States. This was throwing back the ideas which Watkin had once held, and which Newcastle had considered and rejected. Whether the enquiry by McEwen was genuine is uncertain; he was connected with Watkin as a shareholder in the Grand Trunk Railway and both the Colonial Office and members of the Canadian government expressed their suspicions that McEwen was only a man of straw. Certainly the Company lost no time in telling the Colonial Office of the enquiry and asking how long they were expected to hold off other purchasers because of Canadian wishes.

The position of Cardwell and the Colonial Office at this juncture was perhaps a little equivocal. Although they favoured a policy of adding the North-west Territory to Canada, the actual commitment which they had undertaken was merely to guarantee a loan which would enable Canada to undertake the purchase. The terms of the purchase, and the flotation of the loan, had been left to Canada, and the home government had no official part to play in the negotiations with the Company; nor indeed, on this basis, was the Company directly concerned in the arrangement which the Canadians had made for their loan to be guaranteed.

Canada, however, had not yet made an offer. The Legislature was holding its last sessions at Quebec and its first at Ottawa, and attention was much taken up in drafting constitutions for Quebec and Ontario (as the two provinces were now called), so that it was 22nd June, 1866, before the Canadian Executive Council so far rose to the fly of McEwen's alleged offer as to state its views. The Canadians then denied the Company's territorial rights in general terms, disputed the wisdom of allowing such a sale to speculators, and fell back upon Newcastle's dictum that the very existence of a colony would depend upon its exercising a 'liberal and prudent disposal of its lands'. From generalities to particulars, the Executive Council argued the imminence of a gold rush to the Saskatchewan. Gold was indeed being found on the Saskatchewan, and further north in Peace

River, and the Canadians urged that an influx of diggers would be beyond the Company's control, that the diggers would be mostly aliens, and that they would sever the continent and end the possibility of an all-British transcontinental railway. The interests of Canada, and of the whole of British North America, therefore lay in the immediate establishment of a strong government, and the promotion of settlement, as part of the British colonial system.

Neither the generalities nor the immediate considerations added anything to the discussion which had not been already gone over many times, and the Canadian Executive Council did not make a bid for purchase. Instead, it explained that it felt inhibited from making any such move because of the possibility of a federal union. This however was a possibility which the Canadians hoped would be realised in a few months' time, so that the newly-formed Confederate government could then open talks.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, having settled their internal troubles, had their representatives ready to discuss federation in London during the summer of 1866, but the appointment of Canadian delegates was further delayed by the defeat of Gladstone's government at the end of June. This meant that Lord Carnarvon took over from Cardwell as Colonial Secretary, and that the Earl of Derby became Prime Minister. The new ministry was if anything more friendly towards a federal union and the absorption of the North-west Territories than the old one. Whereas Cardwell had been reluctant to do more than guarantee a Canadian loan and had noted against the Canadian reaction to McEwen's offer that it was hard to see how to prevent the Company from selling lands which were its own and for which no plan had matured, Carnarvon at last got the delegates of Canada and the Maritimes assembled together in London in December 1866. He himself sat among them to help bring their discussions to a conclusion, and he suggested to Head that as soon as the federal discussions had produced an authority which was capable of dealing with it, an arrangement might be made.

The suggestion that the Company should hold off, and keep the issue open, until the North American colonies had settled their own affairs, was not entirely acceptable, and Carnarvon had to re-open the idea that the home government might perhaps accept the transfer, which would be to 'Her Majesty's Government or the Province of Canada'; he had also to over-rule Head's protest at the procedure adopted. Head, in his turn, was being pressed by the shareholders. A powerful group, including Watkin, had held a meeting to discuss

colonisation in January 1866. They were refused the use of the Company's hall for their meeting, so they assembled at the London Tavern to hear James Dodds propose that, if a Crown Colony should not be set up, then the Company itself should embark upon colonisation. The shareholders had held previous meetings at the London Tavern, to complain that negotiations with the Canadian government were hanging fire, but in January, and again in May 1866, they passed resolutions pitching the Company's price at five millions, advocating direct colonisation by the Company if this price could not be got, protesting against rumours that the Colonial Office intended to assign the lands to Canada, and appointing a powerful delegation to talk with the Committee.

The shareholders had not done badly in their investment in the Company. In the middle of 1866 the Stock Exchange price of the shares stood higher than at any time for the previous ten years, and some added status came with plans to sell the house in Fenchurch Street. But the shareholders wanted action and a forward-moving policy, and when they met their Committee in July 1866 Dodds and Watkin led an attack on the directors. They both wanted to prevent the Colonial Office from forcing the Company to accept less than the maximum price for the lands. Watkin protested that Canada began with a basic assumption that the Company's title was indefensible, and that Canada had a right to the lands. He reverted to Newcastle's ideas of Crown Colonies, and he placed his hopes of the Company securing a better price on a change of ministry and a new attitude in the Colonial Office. Head explained the background of the problem, and the Company's desire that Red River should be given a government deriving its authority direct from the Crown. He explained that he had asked the Colonial Office how long the Company ought to wait for Canada to make an offer, and that he had never received an answer to his question. So he came to the quandary of colonisation, that 'We cannot colonize successfully the land which we have, without another government, and we have been refused another government without sacrificing the land which we seek to colonize'. Moreover, the Company could not encourage settlers until its right to the land was vindicated, for Head put it to the shareholders that, as honest men, they could not sell the lands until they had ascertained that their title was sound.

With all this talk of land, the Company was still a fur-trading Company. The fur trade was subject to cyclical rise and decline and (anticipating modern research on these lines) Head told the meeting that 'failure in one year of an insignificant class of animal may cause

the decrease in the next for a far more valuable beast'. But though returns were not always satisfactory the fur trade as a unit must be regarded as the core of the Company. Its men, posts, ships, trade-goods and annual revenue were knit together in any analysis of the Company's financial position, and a factor which must be given great weight was that the traders were afraid that the Company might undertake a policy of colonisation by which capital, and the enthusiasm of the directors, would be diverted from the fur trade. So Head concluded that 'the Hudson's Bay Company with its present machinery and with the Government of Rupert's Land in its present form, would act rashly and inadvisedly if, depending on its own resources and powers, it were at once to embark on such an undertaking' of colonisation as Dodds had suggested.

A postal ballot of all the shareholders gave the Governor and the directors overwhelming support; 5,308 shares (held by 122 individuals) were in favour of immediate colonisation whereas 53,942 shares held by 496 individuals) were against. It was clear, of course, that a substantial minority was in favour of immediate action, but the great majority, both in numbers of persons and in the size of holdings, supported the directors.

Anxiety to realise the landed assets was unmistakable, and was as strong in the Committee as in the shareholders. But the discussions of July 1866 left the Company still waiting for a move from Canada since Head had, in effect, acknowledged that the Company could neither sell nor develop its lands until the Canadian challenge to its title had been either developed or abandoned. The British North America Act, brought a solution within grasp. With John A. Macdonald as their Chairman the delegates from Canada and from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick began their meetings in London on 4th December, 1866. Macdonald was working against the clock, for the chance to achieve federation had not risen until the New Brunswick election of May 1866 and it would probably disappear with the Nova Scotia election which was due in May 1867. The Canadians had assumed that the fall of Russell's Liberal ministry and the departure of Cardwell, in early July 1866, had ended the British government's support for federation. The Canadian delegation had therefore not sailed for London, as had been agreed with the Maritimes, in July, and Irish Fenian threats from the United States had then dictated further delay. Fenianism did indeed strengthen those fears of America which were strong arguments for federation, but the fact that the Maritime delegation was in London while the Canadians had not yet sailed opened a rift which could have proved

dangerous. Macdonald, however, knew that the Maritime leaders were committed to federation. He also knew that the Act must be got through Parliament during the first session of 1867 (otherwise the Nova Scotia election would intervene). But he worked to a timetable with these facts in view, with the intention of getting the Act ready for presentation to Parliament when it reassembled towards the beginning of February 1867.

Within a fortnight agreement had been reached among the delegates; they were, of course, in substantial agreement before they met in London, they had the Quebec Resolutions to guide them, Macdonald to lead them, and Carnarvon to counsel them. So although there were long discussions about the Intercolonial Railway, about allocation of seats in the Federal Legislative Council, the admission of Prince Edward Island, and educational problems, the delegates were able to frame their resolutions by 24th December. It was another month before the Colonial Office and the legal experts had done their work and the delegates met on 24th January, with Carnarvon in the chair, to discuss the draft Act. Some compromises were necessary, and though it was accepted that 'Canada' should be the name of the federation, Macdonald's proposal that it should be made a kingdom was abandoned because the Prime Minister, Derby, was afraid of American susceptibility—and American legislators were in fact discussing a protest against the consolidation of the provinces into a confederation. In the end the new style of 'Dominion' was accepted, both by the delegates and by the Queen, as a title which would give dignity and would also pay tribute to the monarchical principle.

The Bill was not quite ready by the time Parliament reassembled on 5th February, but it was in its last stages of preparation and was read for the first time, in the House of Lords, a week later. But Parliament, and even the Tory Cabinet itself, was deeply divided over electoral reform in 1867, and although the British North American Bill easily came through the three readings in the House of Lords it seemed unlikely that the Commons would have time or interest for it, and the propriety of sending so important a Bill to the Commons, merely to receive a rubber stamp on the Colonial Secretary's decision, was openly disputed. But Carnarvon pressed on. The Tory ministry might fall any day, but the Bill was through its first and second readings in the Commons in two successive days. The only serious opposition came from John Bright, arguing that it would be better if Canada became an independent state. Even in the committee-stage there was little opposition, and although the

Cabinet split over Parliamentary reform and Carnarvon resigned on the same day as the Bill got through the committee-stage, the Bill was safe. In the background was a constant fear that Joseph Howe might secure delay until after the Nova Scotia election. But on 8th March, ten days after it had been introduced in the Commons, the Bill passed its third reading without debate.

For the Company the North America Act was obviously an event of the very greatest significance. In its broad implications it meant that America north of the 49th parallel would remain British, and that separate provinces would not succumb to the United States. It meant, too, that a route from the Atlantic to the Pacific would be pushed forward, for the Intercolonial Railway and the Grand Trunk, and further expansion westwards, had an important place in the arguments and agreements. The Act meant, also, that the political background for annexation of the Company's territories had changed. Instead of Upper Canada being balanced by the opposition of Lower Canada, and by its own reluctance to advocate any payment, the Maritimes were now part of the wider confederation, on the whole inclined to support the Westerners rather than the French, and any prospect of completing the federal picture by inclusion of British Columbia must depend upon acquisition of the Company's lands.

Apart from these shifts in the political balance, the North America Act meant that there was in existence a federal government which could act with confidence and authority, and that the legal procedure for acquiring the territories had been laid down. For completion of the federation, Clause 146 of the Act provided for admission of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia (on addresses from their own legislatures and from the Houses of Parliament of Canada) and of Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory, or either of them, on an address from the Houses of Parliament in Canada. Admission was to be made by the Queen in Council, and the Act permitted this procedure to be adopted. This was a long step forward, and it clearly showed the direction in which policy was turning. It subsequently proved that the Canadians had taken this clause (146) as embodying all that needed to be done, whereas the Colonial Office and the Company took it only as setting out the procedure to be adopted for the actual transfer, after other matters had been settled. But, however, this particular clause was taken, the North America Act clearly brought urgency and purpose into the negotiations for the transfer of the Company's territories to the newly-formed Dominion.

Reports of American ambitions, the presentation of a Bill for admitting the North American provinces to the United States, and renewed proposals that American troops might pursue felonious Indians north of the boundary, had played a part in convincing the English officials that federation should be secured as soon as possible. Protests on the same subjects reached the Colonial Office as the North America Act was going through Parliament, and the Company was asked what steps were being taken to prevent Indians using its territories as a refuge. This was meant as a temporising measure, a gesture until the new Dominion should be ready to assume authority. But the Company's answer had some real weight, for not only did Head revert to the former correspondence and the Company's insistence on a frontier force and on officials with authority not derived from the Company; he also submitted a map showing that there was a vast area just east of the Rockies from which the rivers flowed south, not north. Therefore this area was not within the Company's territories, and since much of it was north of 49° it was in British possession but had no government at all. Here, said Head, was an area into which Indians from the United States would almost certainly retreat, and for which an effective government was essential. It was a well-timed reiteration of the plea that 'if it is intended to retain the territory north of the 49th parallel as British Soil, some steps ought to be taken for asserting its British character and maintaining laws and order within it'.

At Red River deserters from the American army were alleged to have crossed into the Company's territories, and to have sold American army mules to the settlers. William Mactavish denied the American officer's claims that the deserters should be extradited, and the Colonial Office supported the Company, though they suggested that there should be a law against receiving marked goods.

This raised precisely the question which was agitating Red River, and the Company. Who was to make such laws? And who was to enforce them, or any other laws? A group of settlers rallied behind the *Nor'Wester* and John Schultz to demand union with Canada. Another group, led by 'Dutch George' Emmerling, clamoured for union with the United States. The majority were content to wait on events, sentimentally attached to the British connection, accepting the *status quo* but ready to go into opposition when government impinged on their interests. By the time that Dallas had retired from Assiniboia, in May 1864, most of the agitation against the Company had smouldered down. But news of the sale to the International Finance Society had left the Company's servants with a

strong feeling that they were (to quote one of them) 'sold like dumb driven cattle', and had undermined the loyalty of that important element in the population. At the same time a small colony emerged at Portage la Prairie and another at Edmonton, and both communities asked for annexation to Red River in 1864. When the Council of Assiniboia decided that it had not sufficient power to undertake such commitments, it was underlining its own instability and the need for state-sponsored government both to deal with the settlers and with the Sioux and the Americans. Such a lack of confidence was bound to be reflected in the attitude of the settlers; but on the whole opinion rallied behind the desire for a Crown Colony rather than behind Schultz's movement for annexation to Canada.

The advent of federation had made possible some reconciliation between the views of those who wanted a Crown Colony and those who wanted annexation to Canada. Thomas Spence, a land-surveyor who arrived in Red River in the autumn of 1866, did much to precipitate matters. He had already written to ask Carnarvon what were the British government's intentions for the colony, and in early December he called a meeting of the settlers, and though it is certain that only five men attended (probably because Spence changed the time of the meeting), resolutions were passed in favour of annexation to 'the Grand Confederation of British North America' and a memorial was circulated asking for the creation of a Crown Colony with a view to eventual annexation.

As this memorial was sent to Canada, to be forwarded to the Colonial Office by the Lieutenant-Governor, Spence was at the small settlement at Portage la Prairie, where in January 1868 he was elected 'President of the Republic of Manitoba', and the citizens decided to raise taxes for public revenues. The decision to levy taxes brought the settlers at Portage la Prairie into open conflict with the Hudson's Bay Company, which refused to pay. In this Spence was in collaboration with Canadian politicians, and his reports of the formation of a Republic of Manitoba duly reached the Colonial Office through the medium of Angus Morison, John A. Macdonald and the Governor-General. Morison assured him that his proceedings would bring the Company and the home government into conflict; and of this the outcome might well prove to be the incorporation of the territory into the Dominion, which was proclaimed at Ottawa on 1st July, 1867. William Mactavish however had roundly asserted the Company's rights, telling Spence that he had no right to collect customs, nor to administer an oath of allegiance

to his followers. In this the Governor and Committee supported Mactavish when in April 1868 the Colonial Office forwarded Spence's petition asking for admission to the Dominion. The so-called Republic asked to be incorporated under the terms of the British North America Act, reproached the British with their total neglect of a large portion of the 'garden of the North West', and threatened 'as a last and desperate resource to throw ourselves upon the liberality and protection of the United States Government for recognition and ultimate annexation'. There were times when such threats might have been taken seriously. But in the summer of 1868 incorporation of the Company's territories in the Dominion seemed so near that the Colonial Office, like the Company, was unruffled. Spence was told that the settlers could not set up a government, or even municipal institutions, without reference to the Hudson's Bay Company and to the Crown. The settlers might indeed voluntarily submit themselves to any laws they chose to make, but they could not enforce them on others.

Feeling at Red River was kept on the boil even after Spence had withdrawn to Portage la Prairie. Schultz, as editor of the *Nor'Wester* and leader of the Canadian party, was involved in a judgment-case for debt in which he defied the jurisdiction and the verdict of the court, broke out from jail, and finally won a verdict by what was commonly believed to be perjured evidence. He had shown that it was difficult to get justice in Assiniboia, and he also impugned the Council (to which he sought nomination), declaring that no opponent of the Company could ever get a seat there. As the Republic of Manitoba collapsed in 1867, the *Nor'Wester* pilloried the Company's administration, supported Schultz's liberation from jail, and claimed an elected council and representative government. The paper refused to print a counter-petition in which it was stated that the majority of the inhabitants did not support Schultz, but William Mactavish kept the peace by arranging that this counter-petition should be printed but should be charged for.

The localised movement at Red River, like that at Portage la Prairie, had in view an appeal to Canadian public opinion. It was its circulation in the east which made the *Nor'Wester* so important, and which made Mactavish's compromise over the counter-petition acceptable, for by this means the counter-petition would become known in Canada. There John A. Macdonald was ready to move—but upon his own terms. The delegates who had secured the British North America Act had pointed out to the Colonial Office that Section 146 of that Act provided for the admission of Rupert's Land

to the Dominion, and they asked that this might be done in the form of direct annexation to Canada rather than in the form of the creation of a Crown Colony. The memorandum was not explicit as to procedure, but it was clear in that it took annexation to be the corollary of federation and in that it asked for direct annexation rather than the formation of Crown Colonies.

When the Dominion had been formally instituted in July 1867, and Macdonald had stage-managed the formation of his first cabinet, he found the Colonial Office insistent that annexation should proceed with some urgency. But, whereas the Canadians wanted the home government in some way or other to expropriate the Company, the Colonial Office wanted the Dominion government to begin direct negotiations with the Company. This was a course which the Canadians had long evaded, and they were not likely to embark on it in the first six months of their existence as a Dominion, when their financial structure was painfully weak and it was not to be expected that the Maritimes or Quebec Province would accept any financial commitment for this purpose. Macdonald therefore drove a distinction between government and territorial rights. In the Legislature he proposed that the Dominion should ask for the right to absorb, to legislate for, and to govern Rupert's Land, leaving to the Company no right save that of asserting its claim to the soil through the normal legal processes; and he sardonically asked what the Company's title would be worth when it was known that Canadian courts would adjudicate on it. The Senate and the House of Representatives both concurred, and the Dominion petitioned in December 1867 for an Order in Council annexing Rupert's Land and the Red River Settlement to Canada, the Company's territorial claims to be dealt with after the annexation; the Dominion would respect the legal rights of any corporation or individual.

Macdonald's suggestion that, having taken over jurisdiction in the territories, the Dominion would then adjudicate upon the territorial rights, was not acceptable either to the Company or to the Colonial Office. The Company in particular was alarmed since Macdonald had already hinted that the claims would soon be disposed of in a Canadian court; and the request for an Order in Council had been accompanied by a plea of urgency which protested against consultation with 'private or third parties'. Annexation was still (the Canadians hoped) to be the work of the home government; but they hoped that the home government would carry it through without bargaining with the Company, as they themselves would have been inclined to do. The Colonial Office would in any case have

been averse from handing over the territories on these terms, and they were strengthened in this view by a report from the Law Officers of the Crown, who reported that a government could not be set up in Rupert's Land simply by Orders in Council. As against the Canadian view that the North America Act had made such a procedure possible, the Law Officers of the Crown advised that before Orders in Council could be drawn up the annexation would need an Act of Parliament; and it would need the Company's consent. Even if the proprietary rights were interfered with as little as possible, the Law Officers still thought that the Company should be got to consent even to the transfer of jurisdiction.

The Company reached much the same conclusion by a different process. The Governor and Committee, when told of the Canadian proposal, replied in January 1868 that they were still, as they had long been, ready to abandon all political power in the territories. But their right to the soil was something different, and even assuming that the right to develop the land was necessary for the establishment of a political power they claimed that legal title should be settled before jurisdiction was handed over. They had a strong case when they pointed out that Canada had always abstained from an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council but that she now wanted to transfer the issue to her own courts, and they referred back to previous discussions, in particular to the provisional offer of payment which Newcastle had made in March 1864. They denied Canada's claim to the prairie lands, and they were able to remind the Colonial Office that in 1857 the Company's territorial rights had been defended by the Law Officers of the Crown.

Like the Company, Buckingham at the Colonial Office referred back to Newcastle's proposals for payment to the Company from money which would come from land sales. He could get money neither from Canada nor from the home government, and he could neither insist on the Company's claims nor sacrifice them in advance. His first proposal entailed a purchase by the home government and subsequent transfer to the Dominion. But there was no time for protracted negotiations and he would fail badly if Canada refused to take up the obligation incurred. Canada must be brought into any agreement though Canada's approach offered no security to the Company. At this difficult stage, as it became clear that the old three-cornered discussions must be resumed with little difference, Sir Edmund Head died. The shareholders were again getting restive, for no immediate conclusion seemed in sight, and a private sale of most of the lands for a million pounds had fallen through, like the

previous discussion with McEwen, because the would-be purchaser was a man of straw.

It was virtually certain that Lord Kimberley would succeed Head as Governor, and in fact this was managed as soon as possible. The choice of Kimberley, and indeed of all the Governors of the Company during these years, showed how close was the liaison between the Company and the government, and how great was the political importance attached to the Company. Kimberley had begun his active career in 1852 as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He left this office in 1855 to be British Envoy to Russia but he lacked the easy charm necessary and returned to England in 1857. Kimberley resumed his old post at the Foreign Office in 1859 but resigned in 1861 when he was not offered the Secretary of State's Office, and he was on the back benches, with a brief interlude as special envoy to Denmark in 1864, until he swallowed his pride and took the Under-Secretaryship of the India Office in 1864. He thought India 'far more important than the colonies, and far more interesting', but when Palmerston offered him the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland he took it and showed notable firmness in dealing with the dangers of a Fenian rebellion there. He returned to Westminster with an enhanced reputation and with great self-confidence, somewhat advanced in his views, and prepared to take a strong line and not to curry favour.

For a board of directors which wanted to call the shareholders to heel, and which wanted to stand out against compromise and expediency in the face of the Colonial Office and of Canada, Kimberley was a sound choice. In the meantime, in February 1868 the directors sent their knowledgeable Deputy Governor, Sir Curtis Lampson, to the Colonial Office in an effort to speed negotiations. The move was welcome. But Buckingham was aware that the sort of arrangement which was in view might easily be turned down by Canada since there was a large party in the Dominion which held that settlement could only proceed by free grants of land comparable to those available in the United States. So land sales would produce no money to pay off the Company. This was ominous, but it was clear that the Dominion government wanted the territories; the Grits were pressing for annexation and even the French, led by Cartier, accepted it as desirable.

Buckingham therefore hoped that Canada would arrange the two terms on which the Law Officers had advised him that a transfer might take place—first that an Act of Parliament must be passed, and second that the Company's consent should be secured. The visit

from the Deputy Governor had been encouraging, but when Kimberley had taken office as Governor he pointed out that Newcastle's negotiations in 1864 had only concerned the Saskatchewan area. The present discussions extended to the whole of Rupert's Land and the North-west Territory and so involved the fur trade as well as the areas suitable for settlement. The Company must therefore seek guarantees that it could carry on its trade, and he must put the problem to the proprietors.

Kimberley could not commit the Company to the new proposals as though they were merely a continuation of the discussions of 1864, but in May 1868 the terms which the Company would find acceptable were sufficiently certain for him to outline them. The Company would want a payment of a shilling an acre for land within the territory sold by the government, and a quarter of all revenue to be got from duties on gold and silver exports or from leases to gold and silver mines. Payment should cease when these two sources between them had reached a million pounds sterling. The Canadian government should confirm all land titles already granted by the Company, and the Company should keep its posts and six thousand acres round each post (except at Red River where no reservation was claimed) and should be allotted five thousand acres of wild land for every fifty thousand disposed of by government. There was to be no tax on the Company's lands which were not under cultivation, and no exceptional tax on the Company's land, property or servants. The Company's trade, too, was to be free from any exceptional taxation, and until a million pounds had been paid Canada was to levy no export duty on furs and no import duty on goods taken into the North-west Territory or the part of Rupert's Land which had not been included in the earlier negotiations. The Company should have the right of duty-free transit for its goods, in bond, through the surrendered territories, but Canada was to take over all public administration and the organisation of communications, and was to buy from the Company the materials got ready for the telegraph. The Company assumed that the boundary between Canada and what remained of Rupert's Land would be clearly defined, it claimed that lands under dispute within Canada itself should be settled by grants to the Company, and it reserved the right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Such terms were not acceptable to the Canadian government, and the Colonial Office took exception to the proposals that the Company should be exempt from taxation to so large an extent, and that it should receive (and be allowed to choose) so much free land. The

Company's point was that at the date of hand-over all the land belonged to it, so it might retain what seemed appropriate; and that, unless it were exempt from taxes and customs, as the chief and almost the sole merchant, it might pay its own compensation by way of taxes on its trade. But although the Company's terms were not entirely acceptable they were a basis for negotiation.

It was a feature of Canadian politics that the party which most desired the acquisition of the Company's lands was most vociferous in denying that any payment should be made. In the debates upon Confederation George Brown had shown that to the Clear Grits annexation of the prairies was the logical sequel to federation—'when the fertile plains of the great Saskatchewan territory are opened up for settlement and cultivation I am confident that it will not only add immensely to our annual agricultural products, but bring us sources of mineral and other wealth on which at present we do not reckon'. Further, he had made it clear that in his mind the Company should not only be deprived of its lands but even of its trade. He offered the trade of the Company as a lure to catch the support of the French-Canadians of the Lower Province. 'Well may they look forward with anxiety to the realization of this part of our scheme, in confident hope that the great north-western traffic shall be once more opened up to the hardy French Canadian traders and *voyageurs*. Last year furs to the value of £280,000 stg. were carried from that territory by the Hudson's Bay Company—smuggled off through the ice-bound regions of James' Bay, that the pretence of the barrenness of the country and the difficulty of conveying merchandise by the natural route of the St. Lawrence may be kept up a little longer.' There was some amount of rhetoric in Brown's approach, but for him and his party annexation was in essence a challenge to the Company and its claims, and Buckingham was pilloried in the *Toronto Globe* for listening to the Company's terms.

Macdonald, on the other hand, knew that if the Dominion meant to acquire the territories it must be by some means which took account of the fact that the Colonial Office would neither buy out the Company's rights nor over-ride them. He took the chance to negotiate, and in October 1868 he sent two delegates to London—Cartier as leader of the slightly suspicious French-Canadians who would need to be committed to any engagement, and William McDougall, long an advocate of annexation. They had to arrange terms which would make the Company a willing party to the transfer.

In the meantime the other condition necessary for transfer had been arranged, for at the end of July the Rupert's Land Act had

been successfully put through Parliament—officially ‘An Act for enabling Her Majesty to accept a Surrender upon Terms of the Lands, Privileges and Rights of “The Governor and Company of Adventurers of *England* trading into *Hudson’s Bay*” and for admitting the same into the Dominion of Canada’. This Act in itself did nothing, but it fulfilled the Law Officers’ conditions in that it was a formal statute which made the transfer valid under certain conditions; upon such terms as might be agreed between the Company and the government it should be lawful for the Company to surrender to Her Majesty, and for Her Majesty to accept, all or any part of Rupert’s Land. Such a surrender would extinguish the Company’s privileges and powers within the territory surrendered. But it would not prevent the Company from continuing trade, and it would not be valid unless the home government had approved the terms upon which the surrendered territories would be admitted into the Dominion. Furthermore, any such surrender was to be invalid if, within a month of the surrender and acceptance, Canada did not admit Rupert’s Land into the Dominion; and since it was specified that such a transfer should involve no charge upon the Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom the home government’s role was simply that of an intermediary. The Queen was content to accept the surrender in order to pass it on; she was neither to hold it nor to pay for it, and until the whole operation should be completed, and Rupert’s Land had been brought within the Dominion, the existing authorities (i.e. the Company) were to remain responsible for government and administration.

This cleared the legal procedure. The British North America Act had said that Rupert’s Land might be incorporated by Orders in Council on address from the Houses of Parliament of Canada, and that such Orders in Council should have effect as if they had been enacted by the United Kingdom Parliament. But the Law Officers had said that a statute was first necessary to give validity to such Orders in Council. Buckingham had his statute, and was delighted with it. Now he had to get the Company to make the surrender; and on 31st July, 1868, the same day as the statute became law, he turned to the Company to discuss possible terms, rejecting much of those put forward by Kimberley.

Negotiating with the Deputy Governor at his elbow, Kimberley accepted a limitation of tax-exemption to a twenty years’ period; but when Buckingham wanted to give fixed allocations of land in place of the suggested grant of 5,000 acres for every 50,000 acres settled he argued that the Company preferred allocations near to the settle-

ments, which would increase in value as settlement proceeded. He was willing to exempt land set aside for roads, churches, schools and Indian reservations, from the payment of a shilling an acre, and to cut down the allocations round the posts in fertile areas to three thousand acres for each post. But he envisaged that the Company might itself buy land from the government, and he held that such lands should not count as parts of the units of fifty thousand acres which were to be the bases of allocations to the Company. The Company would not insist on direct resort to the Privy Council, but Kimberley thought it should be retained as a court of appeal in such a complicated arrangement. He also warned Buckingham that the shareholders would probably raise difficulties, and reminded him that from the Company's point of view none of these complications were necessary. The Company would prefer a straightforward cash sale, rather than all this business of contingent payments and allocations of land; and Kimberley reverted in conclusion to the suggestion that payment should be a round million pounds, payable in Canadian bonds.

Buckingham rejoined that Canada was going to need a revenue which, in the early stages of development, could only be got from land values. Payment of a shilling an acre to the Company would probably absorb this revenue, while allocations near the existing posts would take up 500,000 acres (in the best areas) and in addition the Company was asking for ten per cent. of any district as it was opened up. All of this land was to be exempt from taxation until the Company had been paid off, and Buckingham and his advisers thought this was more than the proposed government could stand. There was a school of thought which maintained that the land and the duty of government went together, and that the Company could not claim the one without the other. But Buckingham suggested allocations of land to the existing posts, ranging from five hundred acres at the smallest posts up to a maximum of six thousand acres to the post. The Company's allocations were not to include river frontages, tracks, roads or portages—and instead of the Company's proposal of ten per cent. of each area as it developed Buckingham offered five lots, of two hundred acres each, in each township as it developed. The Company was to pay for surveying such lots, and the right was to cease when Canada had achieved payment of a million pounds, to be derived from a quarter-payment of the dues and licences on minerals and from a parallel quarter-payment of all receipts from land-sales; free grants of land for private purposes should be reckoned as at a shilling an acre, of which the Company would get a quarter.

The effect of this proposal was that the Colonial Office, acting as an intermediary within the Rupert's Land Act, was still trying to buy out the Company with money which would be derived from subsequent development of the land, and which would only be paid over as it came to hand. The maximum payment of a million pounds was retained, but allocations of land to the Company were scaled down, and instead of a payment of a shilling an acre the Company was offered threepence an acre on free grants and a quarter of the sale-price on other lands. To balance the removal of the tax-exemption proposal it was suggested that wild lands should not be taxed until they had been surveyed, and that the home government would confirm all land-titles already granted by the Company, at Red River or elsewhere.

Such proposals and counter-proposals had brought negotiations into December 1868, with the Colonial Office still carrying the main burden of negotiations, in part because this was necessary under the terms of the Rupert's Land Act, in part because when the two Canadian delegates arrived in London in October McDougall fell ill and could do little. Kimberley, in the meantime, had met his shareholders on 24th November, 1868. He had been explicitly told that in 1863 the International Financial Society had floated the Company in its new form, not as a fur-trading company but as a speculation in land values. Under this heading it had got two million pounds (instead of one million) from the investing public; and the prospectus which had achieved this result was quoted to Kimberley at the meeting, with its emphasis on opening up the lands for settlement. It was rather an ugly meeting over which Kimberley presided, for he was told that 'There is a page in the history of this Company which the Committee have never revealed to the shareholders'. This slur on the Committee referred to rumours that large sums had been taken from the capital of the Company and paid to individuals as compensation—but compensation for what, or to whom it was paid, was not specified. Kimberley and the officials were entirely justified in bringing the shareholders back to the fact that they, the shareholders, had fully endorsed the conclusion that the Company itself could not embark upon a policy of land-settlement when the question had been put to them in 1866.

The North America Act and the Rupert's Land Act had certainly advanced the legal position to a point at which annexation would be easily possible: but negotiations to achieve terms for such annexation had hardly advanced from the state in which Newcastle had left them in 1864, and in January 1869 negotiations were again set back

by changes in personnel. The 1867 Reform Act had been a 'Leap in the Dark' by the Tories, and when Derby had resigned the Premiership and Disraeli appealed to the country, he lost the General Election held late in 1868. Gladstone and the Liberals returned to power, and Kimberley resigned the Governorship of the Company and was called to office as Lord Privy Seal. He was politically ambitious, and glad to be in the Cabinet. Two years later, in June 1870, he was made Colonial Secretary. But by that time the Company's business had been settled; and it is most doubtful whether Kimberley would have pushed it on successfully if he had gone straight from the Company to the Colonial Office, or if he would have done anything to break out the negotiations from the detail in which they were sticking. Gladstone had in fact called on Lord Granville to succeed Buckingham at the Colonial Office, and he had just the qualities required by the Company's affair. The conscientious Kimberley admired Granville as 'a very able man in many ways, remarkable for his tact, and shrewd and ready, when he fairly gives his mind to the business before him'. But Kimberley added that 'He seems never to give himself the trouble to reason out any matter completely, and he is singularly ignorant of the details of the questions he has to deal with'. In short, Granville 'besides being deaf has a slipshod way of doing business'. Yet Granville had a direct and purposeful approach which was invaluable.

While Kimberley had resigned from the Company in order to join the Cabinet, Sir Stafford Northcote reversed the process when the General Court of the Company elected him Governor, in succession to Kimberley, on 5th January, 1869. In the ministries of Derby and Disraeli he had held office, first as President of the Board of Trade and then as Secretary of State for India. Northcote had been consulted about the terms of the Rupert's Land Act, he knew the previous government's approach, and was to some extent committed to it. His political career had left him comparatively poor, and it was said that this was what brought him to the Company, at the invitation of Lampson. There seemed an obvious connection between 'an American with a natural and national weakness for graft, and a comparatively poor Cabinet Minister, the intimate friend of Disraeli'. His election gave great satisfaction to the shareholders and he proved an able and devoted leader of the Company. Almost his first act, as Governor, on 13th January, 1869, was to reject the government's recent amendments. He was anxious not to get into a squabble with the Canadian government. But he stuck to the point that payment of a shilling an acre was reasonable, and he argued that exemption

from taxes was justifiable since Canada would not complete payment for many years to come.

The new ministry's immediate pre-occupation was the settlement of American relations, which were still threatening over the *Alabama* affair; its main long-term objective was disestablishment of the Irish Church. Even Kimberley's personal 'Journal of Events' makes no mention of the Company at this time, and the transfer of its lands was obviously not considered a matter of pressing importance. But Granville was not a man to allow negotiations to drag on. It was therefore unwise of Northcote to depart so sharply from the proposals of the Colonial Office, for Granville took the Company's amendments as terminating all previous negotiations. Regarding himself as entirely free since the Company had (as he alleged) rejected Buckingham's proposals, he extricated himself with alacrity from his predecessor's terms and pointed out that the home government was merely a channel of communication. There seemed little hope of agreement on this basis, for the top figure which the Canadian representatives would offer was only £106,431. Moreover the Canadian government proposed to build a road to Fort Garry from Lake of the Woods. This the Company denounced as a trespass on the Company's lands; but Cartier and McDougall claimed that this land lay within the boundaries of Canada as set out by the Constitutional Act of 1791, and that the starvation to which the settlers had been reduced by a plague of locusts made it necessary to build such a road, in mere humanity, so as to get food up to Red River.

Then, seeing that Buckingham's proposals did not command the support of Granville, Cartier and McDougall claimed (on 7th February, 1869) that under the North America Act Rupert's Land and the North-west Territories might be admitted to the Dominion on an address from the Houses of Parliament of Canada only. Such an address had been formally made in the first session of the Dominion Parliament, but Buckingham had anticipated trouble from the Company and had passed the Rupert's Land Act which reversed the procedure envisaged in the North America Act, making the Company's assent and surrender a condition precedent to such a transfer. Canada, they said, was not consulted and was not a consenting party to the Rupert's Land Act. This of course was true, and the Rupert's Land Act was due to Buckingham's acceptance of the Law Officer's opinion that a statute and the Company's assent would be necessary. The Canadians did not attempt to dispute the validity of that decision, nor did they open the detailed discussion of terms again. They denied the basic validity of the Charter, and they denied

that in any case its terms extended to the fertile belt. They then proposed that the address of the Canadian Parliament should be accepted and should be implemented under the North America Act; and if the transfer of Rupert's Land should still seem fraught with difficulty they asked for the transfer at least of the North-west Territory (which was unaffected by any question of chartered rights). This was a logical effort to take the difficulties one at a time and to urge that even if all the Company's arguments were conceded—which the delegates did not do—at least the beginnings of a transfer should be made. In the last resort the delegates suggested a transfer subject to the right of the Company.

The Canadian memorial was logical, but it was not helpful. The Company's response, on 26th February, 1869, was equally unhelpful, for Northcote and the Committee gave their view that the best solution would be to set up a Crown Colony, or perhaps a form of government in which the Company would administer the territories with support from the home government. This took the thing right back to the beginning, as did the statement that the Company was perfectly willing to transfer sovereignty so long as its rights were previously defined. Granville realised that any fair compromise would be unsatisfying to both parties, and with American ambitions to urge him on, he was forced to abandon the position that the Colonial Office was merely an intermediary between the Dominion and the Company. The matter seemed so urgent that on 9th March, 1869, he proposed, first that the Company should surrender the lands to Her Majesty, secondly that Canada should pay £300,000 on the subsequent surrender of Rupert's Land to her. This was a sum three times bigger than the Canadians had offered, and less than a third of what the Company demanded. In similar vein Granville cut across the previous suggestions on land allocation with a proposal that the Company should select blocks of land adjoining the posts up to a total of 50,000 acres, no block outside of Red River to exceed 3,000 acres and no block at Red River to exceed some acreage not yet decided; where possible such blocks of land were to be parallelograms with their length not more than twice their breadth. He defined the 'Fertile Belt' as the land lying between the American boundary, the Rockies, the North Branch of the Saskatchewan, Lake Winnipeg and Lake of the Woods, and he proposed that as land in the fertile belt came to be set out for settlement during the ensuing fifty years the Company might claim allocations not exceeding a twentieth of the land so set out, the allocations being made by lot. He said the Company's land claims in Canada should be for-

feited but that all land-titles existing on 8th March, 1869, should be confirmed, that Canada should take over the telegraph, and that the Company should have freedom to exercise its trade and should not be subjected to any discriminating taxation. The Company's claim to be exempt from taxation until payment had been completed was not mentioned.

This was a forthright effort to cut the knot. Not only did Granville propound solutions which neither side would find fully acceptable, and start from a surrender to the Crown; he told the parties that his proposals were not meant as a start for further discussions. They must either be accepted or rejected—with only minor amendment—and if they were rejected he would send the whole issue to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

The Canadian delegates accepted Granville's terms with little trouble. McDougall's hope had always been that the Company's claims might be denied and the lands acquired without cost to the Dominion. But Canada had throughout been aware that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council might not condemn the Company's claims, and a verdict in the Company's favour would undoubtedly raise the sale-price. If any price was to be paid, then Granville's suggestion was most reasonable from their point of view. The Hudson's Bay Committee, on the contrary, was asked to accept minimum terms for a substantial asset, and some of the members argued that the terms were quite unacceptable; £300,000 was far too little, and the Company itself would have to pay out £15,000 a year in customs to the Dominion, apart from normal taxes. The Committee split on the issue, but they agreed to put Granville's proposals to a General Court of the Company though they asked that Canada should promise that outside the fertile belt the Company would be free to hunt, to cut wood, and to keep its posts. They also asked that land in the fertile belt should not be taxed until it was developed, and they said they would like to see the Canadian government control the import of goods so as to prevent the importation of spirits.

This was the Committee's first reaction. But when a Special Committee met on 13th March to consider Granville's proposals it made the significant amendment that as land in the fertile belt was prepared for settlement the Company might claim allocation of a tenth of the total area instead of a twentieth. The other important deviation from Granville's proposals was that no export duty should be levied on furs; other points were that the Dominion should take over the Company's responsibility for paying £300 a year towards the salary of the Bishop of Rupert's Land, that York and Moose

should be retained as ports of entry, that the Company should make no contribution to the costs of surveying, and that it might delay for ten years before taking up its claims to land allocations. The Special Committee further suggested that machinery for arbitration should be set up. Such amendments could not be accepted as matters of detail by the Canadian delegates; and although the Hudson's Bay Committee quickly withdrew the demand for double the allocation of land the Canadians, while accepting ten years' deferment on the land options, refused to bind Canadian parliaments never to tax the fur trade although at that date the Dominion did not use export dues. They would leave York and Moose as ports of entry as long as the traffic warranted, and they would limit the cost of survey to eight cents an acre. But they would take no responsibility for paying the Bishop, and they would not accept an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

It was perhaps this last expedient which the Hudson's Bay men had in mind when they proposed such substantial amendments to Granville's proposals. In itself it almost amounted to a refusal to negotiate for to the Canadians any slur on their own courts was naturally inadmissible. 'We must decline to admit, even by implication, that the judicial tribunals, and the general and local authorities, of the Dominion will fail to understand, or hesitate to respect and carry out in good faith, all the terms and conditions of the proposed arrangements.'

There seemed little scope for further negotiation, and since the two parties were now agreed on compensation of £300,000 and on land allocations of one-twentieth of the areas to be opened for settlement, the right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council seemed the chief point outstanding. The Governor and Committee met on 20th March, 1869, and decided by a majority vote to accept Granville's terms. The Colonial Office then left the Company to settle details with the Canadians, and the Committee met Cartier and McDougall on 22nd March. They were able to agree that the Company should retain the posts actually occupied in the North-west Territory, that they should make a list of their stations and that mere naming of the number of acres required at each post would be a sufficient act of selection. The Company's blocks of land were not to exceed three hundred acres at Lower Fort Garry and ten acres at the Upper Fort, but they were to be allowed access to rivers and roads. The land claims might be deferred for ten years, and the Canadians agreed that the Company should be exempt from responsibility for claims by Indians who alleged that they

owned the lands. The Company in turn agreed to pay the Canadian survey-charge of eight cents an acre.

The Company's claims were estimated to include 25,700 acres in the Saskatchewan, 42,325 acres in the Northern Department and 1,085 in the Southern Department, with the small claim of twenty acres in the Montreal Department. Cartier and McDougall were prepared to accept Granville's proposals as the basis of agreement and these amendments as matters of detail. They were empowered to commit the Dominion government, and they said the Company could rely on the justice and the goodwill of the Parliament and Government of Canada. The home government, in its turn, was prepared to guarantee a loan by which Canada might raise the necessary £300,000, and Cartier and McDougall were anxious to go through with the deal and even in a hurry to get it over. When the Company suggested a fortnight's delay, they refused and asked for the immediate transfer of the North-west Territory.

But the Governor and Committee might well ask for delay at this juncture, for when Northcote put the modified proposals to a General Court on 25th March he was greeted with shouts of 'Treachery' and in the end the meeting had to be adjourned till 9th April. The validity of these meetings was later disputed, for it was held that the Company's by-laws gave no power of resignation and so Kimberley should have been Governor instead of Northcote, Kimberley having been elected for a year. It was stated, too, that the vote was taken by show of hands instead of by ballot, that votes were accepted from shareholders of less than six months' standing, and that an amendment was overlooked. But the objectors were rather concerned that a better price had not been got (they had £500,000 in mind) than with the wisdom of the sale. The meeting in April lasted three hours, and the outcome was a triumph for the Governor, for 'The argument of the minority was the more cogent, but the reasoning of the Chairman, as the event proved, was found to be most convincing'. So wrote the disillusioned secretary, who thought the result would have been different if the Company had been able to undertake colonisation itself, either by setting aside some of its dividends for the purpose or by taking part in an Anglo-American Colonisation Society. By a substantial majority, estimated as at least two to one, the General Court of the shareholders resolved 'That it is expedient to accede to the terms proposed in the communication above referred to and to surrender to Her Majesty all this Company's Territorial rights in Rupert's Land, and in any other parts of British North America'.

The years of negotiation were at last over. The Company had indeed achieved its purpose in handing its lands to the home government instead of direct to Canada. So it had secured recognition of its rights, many minor advantages, and something of a price. But a price of £300,000, even if it was to be paid forthwith instead of in the course of fifty years, was little enough to the men who had paid two million pounds for the Company's assets; and though they retained their trade, their posts, a handsome allocation of land and their ships, goods and other assets, they had parted with the great territory upon which they had based their speculation. Yielding to the advance of settlement, and to the combined pressures of the Dominion and the home government, they had agreed to surrender back to Her Majesty the vast estate which Charles II had conferred upon their forebears.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE END OF COMPANY RULE

The Deed of Surrender was greeted with mixed feelings by the shareholders. It was maintained that the directors had asked for a million pounds, and had been justified in doing so, that the private offers of that price had been genuine and that a syndicate of shareholders would themselves buy the lands for that sum. It had taken all of Northcote's persuasive logic, combined with the strong feeling that he was an honest man who was trying to find the best solution for his proprietors, to convince the final meeting that the surrender should be accepted; and through the discussions ran a powerful undercurrent of opposition. All the detail of the articles seemed to add up only to the conclusion 'Surrender, surrender, surrender', and the Canadian approach and the hurry of the final negotiations produced something of an ultimatum. The extreme view had been put to the general meeting of shareholders by the Irishman Colonel Synge, who took the Canadian attitude as that of the man who approached his victim with 'Arrah be aisy, boy; lie down and let me knock your brains out'; and the most moderate of the shareholders (among those who spoke) felt aghast at the hurry with which the Canadian delegates wished to conclude the arrangement and be gone.

It must be confessed that in these discussions regard for the fur-traders or for the settlers played little part. The settlers were scarcely mentioned, still less the *métis* and Indian inhabitants of the territories. The fur-traders only came into consideration so that the stockholders could assure themselves (as they did) that the traders had no claim to share in the payment of £300,000, or whatever might be gained from the transfer. The meeting was told by the Company's solicitor that 'The rights of the factors are limited to the 40 per cent. on the profits of the trade. . . . They can in no case be entitled to any share of the £300,000'—this despite their recent vindication of a claim to share in the enhanced value of Hudson's Bay House itself, for that figured in the balance-sheets of the fur trade.

The small number of shareholders who announced themselves as 'Old Proprietors' did not differ materially from those who announced that they 'went deliberately into the market' and bought

their shares at a premium 'during that speculative period of 1863'. Their object, old or new, was to make the best bargain for themselves as proprietors, and the one shareholder who tried to speak in defence of the surrender was howled down—'the remaining sentences of Mr. Newmarck's speech were lost'. But since the argument was that the settlers actively supported the transfer, the shareholders may be forgiven their indifference to the settlers' interest. Their indifference to the fur-traders' interests was another matter; but they had bought their shares on the assumption that the Company's lands were the main basis for their speculation, and that the fur trade was working at a steady rate of four per cent. profit, which would not be greatly affected by the sale of the fertile belt.

The fur-traders' position within the Company depended still upon the Deed Poll as it had been revised in 1834. This had given some flexibility as between the numbers of Chief Traders and of Chief Factors and it had allowed the Councils of traders to expel an officer by a majority vote. But it had also allowed the Governor and Committee to nominate to a vacancy, and it had left the system substantially unchanged in its essentials, with the traders co-partners in the fur trade but in the fur trade only, organising the detailed management of the trade and the appointments to posts, and dividing as their 'Share of Profit' forty per cent. of the annual profit of the fur trade. Watkin and Dallas had suggested radical changes in 1863, and at that time the traders had also made their proposals. They wanted to replace their 'Share of Profit' by normal shares in the Company and by a guaranteed income of £350 a year for a Chief Trader and £700 a year for a Chief Factor. A compromise at a guarantee of £275 a year as the 'Share of Profit' for a Chief Trader and £550 a year for a Chief Factor, for five years, was accepted in 1865, and this arrangement was reaching its conclusion as the Deed of Surrender was in its final stages.

There were many points under dispute; the traders claimed a share of the money to be recovered from the United States in recompense for the Possessory Rights in Oregon, they thought the Company's shipping and its premises in London were put into the balance sheets at far too low a figure, and they claimed a share in the value of the lands round the Company's posts. While the Governor and Committee took Counsel's Opinion on the legal points involved, the traders came to the practical issue with which they were concerned. This was that they were expected to cut the profits on which they depended in order to silence opposition for the benefit of future traders and shareholders. They wanted forty per cent. of the profits

free from the burden of silencing opposition; or, more simply, they would accept fifty per cent. of the profits on the existing basis plus a share in the Possessory Rights money, of the value of the Fenchurch Street premises, and of the transfer money if the Company should sell its territorial rights.

By 1869 a radical change was overdue. The fur trade was burdened with 'useless incumbrances whom every officer in charge of a district wishes to transfer', while the traders were dissatisfied with the arrangement of 1865 but yet could only propose that it should be renewed when it expired. The traders were adrift; they could not foresee how the fur trade would emerge from the Deed of Surrender; and their careers were tied to the fur trade. So, though they accepted the need for changes in the institutions, they resolved 'with great unanimity' that they had great hopes for the future of the trade. But they wished to sell their retired interests in the trade, and when the Committee steadily refused to accept this offer the best arrangement which could be reached was that Chief Traders should be given an extra £55 a year and Chief Factors an extra £110 a year for the period from 1865 to 1870. The only constructive suggestion which emerged was that each trader's share of the profits would be increased if some vacancies were kept open.

This was a proposal which was in keeping with the inevitable conclusion that the Deed of Surrender would involve curtailment of the fur trade. It might well be that profits, and even the bulk of the trade, would increase from the northern lands which were not required for settlement. But the areas to be supplied and administered, and the duties to be fulfilled, must certainly decline. So the number of officers could also be cut; and the Committee was most anxious to make the trade continue attractive to its officers, and made this proposal as an interim solution while it also tried to assess the future. Much as the Committee looked to a realisation of land values, it also meant to remain in the fur trade, and so it was necessary to assure the traders that 'We feel strongly convinced that the true interest of the Company is to place the Chief Factors and Chief Traders on such a footing as may insure their cordial and cheerful co-operation, and may satisfy them that they are dealt with in an equitable and liberal spirit'. So the Committee refused to renew the guarantee of the 'Share of Profits' in 1870, but suggested that the American recompense for the Proprietary Rights in Oregon should go to the fur trade, together with the sale price of the Fenchurch Street premises (£45,000). Having taken legal opinion on the point, they denied the traders any share in the £300,000 to be paid under the Deed of

Surrender, but they offered a share in the profits to be got from developing the lands which would be left to the Company after the transfer.

In that the Deed Poll had ascribed to the traders a share of the annual profits of the fur trade, not of the property of the Company, this was a not unreasonable offer, and in 1870 the President of the Council of the Northern Department, Donald A. Smith, was deputed by the traders to confer with the Committee and to secure reasonable remuneration on these lines. Negotiation was made easier by the fact that the 'Share of Profits' for 1871-2 was over £500, and the Company started its new régime with a new arrangement, accepted in December 1871, by which the traders still received forty per cent. of the profits of the trade but divided the money according to a new hierarchy which ranged from a Chief Commissioner down to Junior Chief Traders. The arrangement, and its troubled history, lie in the future in 1870; of immediate importance at that crucial time was the necessity to preserve the loyal interest of the traders while denying their power to postpone, to deny, or even to profit from the transfer of the territory. They were left on one side, uneasy and often ill-informed spectators of the negotiations.

The *métis* were a different problem altogether, and the very characteristics which had brought success to William McDougall in the negotiations in England led to his failure at Red River. There the grasshopper plague of 1867 had been reproduced in 1868, and large-scale relief became essential. The Company raised £2,890 2s. 4d. in voluntary contributions, and the Committee decided that the editor of the *Nor' Wester* should be told of this, and that the Committee would increase the contribution. Eventually £5,000 was made available, and the money was spent on bringing in supplies and seed-corn from the Company's agent at St. Paul. In the colony the Company's action was recognised and acceptable, but in Canadian political circles this was far from the case, and the Company was accused of neglecting the sufferings of the settlers, while the Canadian government itself, as a measure towards famine relief and to make it easier to bring in supplies, began to build a relief road from Fort Garry to Lake of the Woods. This move roused the opposition of the Hudson's Bay Committee and also created deep hostility in the settlement. McDougall was the Minister of Public Works under whom the road construction was organised, and while he denied the Company's right to the land his surveyors and workers consorted with Schultz and the 'Canadian' party among the

settlers, fell out with the *métis* on social grounds, and gave the firm impression that the Canadian government would be unlikely to grant the *métis* a title to the lands which they occupied.

In the early summer of 1869 the Colonial Office began to draft the agreement with the Company into terms which would conform to the Address from the Parliament of Canada. This would fulfil the terms of the North America Act and of the Rupert's Land Act, but final agreement promised to require time. In June the Dominion was pressing for the last formalities to be settled by telegram. Anxious to begin a survey of the territories the Dominion urged that close definition of the assignments of land round Fort Garry was of no consequence since the Canadian government would ensure that justice was done. But the Company had always required definition of its rights before the transfer took place, and the half-breeds were by no means convinced that the Dominion government would respect their claims. So much became clear when McDougall sent in Colonel Dennis to survey the lands, and this led to the first serious clash. McDougall paid no attention to Dennis's warning that the half-breeds would object to any survey before their claims had been recognised by the Dominion government, and he ordered the survey to continue. A party of half-breeds led by Louis Riel forcibly halted the survey. They were not armed, but they halted the surveyors by force, and they threatened violence.

Such action by the half-breeds revealed an organisation and a political purpose which were significant in themselves, and most important in the circumstances of 1869. The *Nor'Wester* and the Canadian group had so decried the Company's title to its land as to leave the *métis* in serious doubt on that score, and they had so abused the Company's government that the *métis* were prepared to believe that the Company would hand them over without regard for their interests; and they were led to believe that the lands which they claimed could with equal force be claimed by the Indian tribes. Both of these ideas had been steadily spread by the *Nor'Wester* and although the Company had included a safeguard for land-titles at Red River this referred rather to titles derived from the Company than to lands acquired by squatting, as most of the *métis*' holdings had been. Their claims were indeed neglected in the discussions. It was open to doubt what security they owned; and the 'Canadian' surveyors (some of whom were American), greatly increased the *métis*' uneasiness over their land-titles. Such uneasiness rose easily and naturally from the very fact of a survey being made. It was stimulated by the unruly conduct and large talk of the surveyors and

of other members of the 'Canadian' party who boasted that under Dominion rule they would claim large properties. Here the general suspicion of the *métis* was crystallised when, at Oak Point, on the road which he was building, the Canadian surveyor John Snow entered with Schultz upon a scheme by which the Indians sold him their title for provisions (probably for liquor, since it was later alleged that Snow was convicted of giving spirits to the Indians). This roused suspicions of the land-hunger of the Canadians; and by resurrecting the Indians' claims to the lands it undermined the whole position of the *métis* along with that of the Selkirk settlers and the Company's colonists who derived their claims from the disputed 'sale' by Chief Peguis to Selkirk.

Troubles over land-titles were easily grafted on to the general uneasiness, the feeling that the Canadians thought they had bought the country, and that those whose fortune (or misfortune) it was to live there must abide the consequences. The Canadian government seemed under the impression that the settlers were so abused by the Company that they would welcome admission to the Dominion regardless of the terms. This, said the fair-minded Protestant Bishop Machray 'is so erroneous as to be only ludicrous to those who know the real circumstances'. The Company's officers at the settlement were men of the highest reputation, and though the Bishop thought the Governor and Directors had been gravely at fault in their conduct at the transfer he was convinced (and he had been at Red River since 1865) that the Company had been neither oppressive nor unpopular. Mactavish as Governor was 'incapable of action from serious illness from the first'; but he was greatly respected and accepted as a worthy representative of the Queen. His wife brought him into friendly contact with the Roman Catholic priesthood and laity, and Mactavish was also closely connected by marriage with the trading elements in the colony; Andrew McDermot, the principal independent trader, was his father-in-law, his wife's sister was married to Andrew Bannatyne, the leader of the orthodox settlers, and James McKay the important plains trader was a brother-in-law.

Opposition to the Company was largely the result of agitation by Schultz, the Canadian group, and the *Nor'Wester*; and much of the agitation was sterile, the meetings were 'scenes of uproarious merriment instead of orderly gatherings for the public weal'. As the Canadians provoked criticism the settlers began to realise that their objections to Company rule were slight, that their views could be effectively put in the Council of Assiniboia, and that even if their

legal trials 'savored more of arbitration than the law', that suited them better than if a pack of lawyers had got among them. There was, in fact, far less of an active desire for annexation to Canada than the outside world imagined, and there was far more consciousness of the needs of Red River as a community.

This was a corporate feeling cut across by sectional interests, and among the white settlers and traders it did not emerge so clearly as among the *métis*. But throughout the settlement there were strong and coherent feelings which a wise administrator would have taken into account. Alexander Begg wrote (with good sense if with little style) from the centre of the circle of Red River free traders that 'The Canadian government too will do well to not throw aside the advice and assistance the H.B.C. will surely have in its power to give'. He was alarmed and depressed at the way in which the Dominion government made no attempt at 'feeling the pulse of the settlers finding out their ideas on the change proposed and opening out as far as possible the views of the Canadian government towards them'. It was Canada rather than the Company which was suspect at Red River in 1869 and 1870.

William Mactavish had tried to put the problem to the Dominion government during a visit to Ottawa in June 1869. He was rebuffed; his advice was not asked, his views were not listened to, and when Bishop Taché asked his advice before setting out for Ottawa later in the year (on the way to Rome) the Governor told him he was probably wasting his time. 'I have just returned from Ottawa, and although I have been for forty years in the country, and Governor for fifteen years, I have not been able to make any of my recommendations to be accepted by the Government.' John A. Macdonald gave a completely different version. He claimed that it was the Company's duty to prepare the settlers for the transfer and that no steps in that direction were taken. 'The people have been led to suppose that they have been sold to Canada, with an utter disregard of their rights and position. When Governor Mactavish visited Canada in June last, he was in communication with the Canadian Government, and he never intimated that he had even a suspicion of exciting discontent, nor did he make any suggestions as to the best mode of effecting the proposed change, with the assent of the inhabitants.' If Mactavish was unable to make his voice heard, that would bring these two accounts into conformity. But the Bishop would have supported Mactavish's view, for he went on his way to Rome angry and disappointed at the reception he had met. The Dominion ministers told him that they knew of the possibility of

unrest and that they had made provision for it, but they ridiculed his fears and Taché could get no satisfaction.

In fact, the Dominion legislature was so far committed to its Act for the government of the territories by the time Taché had begun to discuss matters at Ottawa that it would have been difficult to halt or to amend the set process. But that process was in itself nothing but the unthinking fulfilment of the old 'annexationist' policy. The Act for the temporary government of Rupert's Land was passed in June, and placed over the settlement a Governor and a Council to be nominated by the Governor-General in Council—this without any consultation of the settlers, without any promise that they would be represented on the Council, and without any assurance that their land-claims would be recognised. The Council was to number not more than fifteen, and though by implication councillors might be residents, there was no condition that they should be. The whole machinery of government might perhaps be imported from Canada, like the Governor. He was named as the Honourable William McDougall, the old logical annexationist who had been sent to England to negotiate the transfer, and who as Minister of Works had been responsible for the road-project and for the survey parties which had caused so much trouble. When he had put forward a memorandum to accompany the Address of the Canadian legislature praying for the transfer, he had spoken of the need to over-ride 'private or third parties whose position, opinions and claims, have heretofore embarrassed both Governments', and he regarded all the institutions of Assiniboia as usurped and outworn. It would have been clean contrary to his life-long convictions for McDougall to have acknowledged the validity of the institutions which he was to replace, and anything in the nature of a formal hand-over by the Council of Assiniboia, any explanation of the Dominion's purpose, or a courteous treatment of existing officers, as such, was not contemplated by him.

McDougall, also, was to be accompanied to Red River by a high proportion of nominated and external councillors—a legal adviser, a military adviser to deal with police matters and the Indian question, a Secretary of the Council, and a Treasurer and Collector of Customs. The persons were chosen although the actual appointments would have to be delayed until the transfer had been effected; and McDougall himself also could not be appointed Lieutenant-Governor until then. He left Ottawa at the end of September, with instructions to proceed to Fort Garry and to be ready to assume his office on the actual transfer. He was to offer places on the Council to

Mactavish and to *Judge* John Black, the Company's judicial officer, and he was to send to Ottawa a list of settlers connected with the Company, who might also be nominated to the Council, and a report on the constitutional and administrative situation of the settlement.

While McDougall and his group of councillors were making their way up to Fort Garry, the Secretary of State designate, who would be his superior as the officer responsible for administration of the provinces, was already in the settlement. The veteran Nova Scotian Joseph Howe was indeed a Cabinet Minister as President of the Council, but as far as his presence and authority in Rupert's Land were concerned he was in just as invidious a position as McDougall would have been, for his appointment would carry no weight until after the transfer had taken place. But Howe emphasised that he was present as a private person, he steadily avoided anything which would seem to commit him to support of the 'Canadian' party, he admitted that he was most impressed by the Company's régime, and he impressed Mactavish as 'a shrewd clear headed man'. He refused to address a public meeting, but in private conversations he counselled moderation, and he left the impression that if the settlers stood up for their rights the period of 'paternal' rule from Canada would only be brief. He was fully aware of the possibility of trouble and when he, on his way out, met McDougall coming up to Red River (a brief interview in a heavy storm) he warned the Governor-to-be of possible trouble, and wrote to him from St. Paul to caution him against allowing Schultz and the 'Canadian' party to appear as representatives and agents of the Canadian government.

It is possible that McDougall never received this letter, but even the briefest of personal encounters with Howe must have left him aware of the possibility of serious disturbance. Opposition to the surveys had not abated. Indeed the *métis* were hardening in their attitude. They had begun to show signs of effective organisation, it was strongly suspected that the Roman Catholic clergy were with them in their resistance to a Protestant and English absorption, and rumours could easily spark off serious trouble. In particular Mactavish was afraid that newspaper reports of the breech-loading rifles which McDougall's party were bringing might soon be twisted into rumours that arms were being brought up to force the half-breeds to submit. 'These people will never learn', he concluded; and indeed the Canadian government had played its hand badly.

There were, of course, elements in the situation which might have led to the conclusion that the unrest would fizzle out. The *métis* were

only part of the settlement, and even they were not united in resistance to the transfer. In addition to the *voyageurs* and buffalo-hunters, with their half-hearted approach to farming, the *métis* by 1870 had developed a recognisable group of craftsmen and traders, and though they had not produced a professional middle class which could have led them into a new way of life within the Dominion they had their leaders and their traditions of common action, and even of leadership, largely derived from the buffalo-hunt. The more respected and well-established of the *métis* seem to have held aloof, but it was one of the fortuitous factors in the situation that McDougall and his party should have approached the settlement in the middle of October when the tough seasonal wage-earners who manned the Company's boats up to Portage la Loche, up the Saskatchewan and down to York, had just come in and were hanging round, for the moment unemployed. With them were the carters who brought goods overland from St. Paul and Fort Ellice, and the great summer hunt had brought back many *métis* who had not set forth on the October hunt.

But though October was thus an unpropitious time of the year for McDougall, the *métis* had been preparing for some form of resistance since July. Up to then there had been murmurings against the arbitrary way in which the home government, the Dominion government and the Company, had disposed of the settlement, but it was not until July that French-Canadian newspapers began to whip up something of *métis* national feeling against annexation by Canada. *Métis* activity, however, began slightly at a tangent to this opposition to Canada, when on 19th July the *métis* met at Fort Garry to claim that as rightful owners of the soil they should share the £300,000 which was to be paid for the land.

The meeting arrived at no conclusion, for John Bruce, a young carpenter who was beginning to emerge as one of the leaders of the *métis*, opposed the suggestion that if their demand were not conceded the *métis* should seize the Company's possessions. The proposal had come from William Dease, a well-connected *métis* who had been appointed by the Company as a Councillor of Assiniboia. His attitude was logical; if the *métis* were going to claim an inalienable right to the soil then they must necessarily deny the Company's right to sell it, and denial of the Company's right to sell would entail a denial of Canada's right to buy. But Bruce and the majority of the *métis* refused to follow Dease in his defiance of the Company while they pointed up their opposition to Canada.

For this apparently illogical trend the reason lay in politics rather

than in economics. Although their right to their lands, with a wider but more nebulous claim to be 'lords of the soil' behind it, was never lost sight of, the *métis* began a series of meetings and discussions which turned more and more to the vindication of the *métis* as a people, bound together by race, language, history, and a way of life. As a people they had the right to be consulted on their future, on the kind of government designed for them, the characters and qualities of their governors, and the nature of the laws and institutions under which they would live.

In the discussions which took place during the summer months of 1869 Louis-David Riel emerged clearly as the leader of the group which was formulating this doctrine of *métis* nationalism. His father Jean-Louis Riel, the *métis* leader of 1849, had been the son of a French-Canadian and of a *métis* mother, and Jean-Louis had married a pure Canadian, so that Louis-David was no more than one-eighth of Indian blood. He had been sent to Montreal for education by Bishop Taché, and had there shown real ability although he did not complete the course. A further year in Montreal, and two years in St. Paul and Minneapolis (and perhaps Chicago) brought him back to Red River in July 1868. He was well-informed on Red River affairs before his return, and although he had not completed his course at the Collège de Montreal Riel had not in any way broken with the Roman Catholic clergy who exercised strong influence over the *métis* and who saw in the 'Canada First' approach of Schultz and his party a grave threat to their position and to their ideals. Bishop Taché himself, with a series of articles which was later published as an *Esquisse sur le nord-ouest de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, had begun the movement in a moderate way, crying down the possibilities for settlement in the North-west.

But the Bishop was in Lower Canada and then on his way to Rome during this summer of 1869, and though he was alarmed at the Canadian attitude his counsels would have been moderate, for such was his character. He left behind as Administrator a 'Frenchman of France', Father Lestanc, who lacked something of the Canadian priests' sympathy for the *métis* and who, it was reported, had 'forbidden all the fathers and priests to speak a word of politics before anyone whatever for fear we should compromise ourselves'. But the result of this diplomatic and correct instruction was that when the *métis* began to prepare to resist the entry of McDougall, Lestanc himself refused to influence them against such a policy since such action would be outside the Church's province; to justify any intervention it would be necessary to know that the *métis*' resistance was

sinful in the eyes of God or contrary to the interests of the country. The other Roman Catholic clergy were, as might be expected, even more favourably inclined. Later they associated themselves closely with the *métis*—the Reverend Georges Dugas and the Reverend Joachim Allard became chaplains and the Reverend Noel-Joseph Ritchot appeared in public as their accepted counsellor. At a later stage they openly supported the movement, in its early stages they may well (as Dugas claimed) have been the soul of the movement. The *métis* took counsel with 'persons wiser and more experienced than themselves' before they began to hold their first small meetings, and not unnaturally the interests of the priests lay in guarding the interests of their parishioners, in keeping them united, and in maintaining a hold on their loyalties.

Yet it seemed to the balanced and well-informed Protestant Bishop Robert Machray (whom Riel described as too good a man to visit Schultz) that it was doubtful if the Roman Catholic clergy could be said to have begun the movement. In fact, a recent and authoritative study places the inspiration and the direction of the *métis* movement firmly on the shoulders of Riel. Whatever may have been his debts to clerical or American friends, he it was who filled the *métis* with their thoughts of nationhood, and he it was who knew the organisation of the buffalo-hunt with its captions and councils, its discipline and its rights, and who used that organisation for the purpose of resisting the Canadians. The *métis* had recently been given the chance to share in their own government when they took part in the organisation of famine-relief and in the catching and distribution of fish, and their organisation of the hunt not only gave to them an administration within which chosen leaders could demand obedience in pursuit of a common purpose, it also gave tangible expression to their desire to be accepted as an articulate community within the settlement, and it placed at the leaders' disposal the only para-military organisation of which the colony could dispose. But the character and purpose of young Riel were all-important. In a time of uncertainty, lack of information and inevitable indecision, his leadership was confident and his purpose simple. While Governor Mactavish had not yet been informed how he should act, nor how the Company proposed to end the disappointments of the councillors and others upon whom it had conferred office, Riel, something of a poet and a born orator, 'enthusiastic and a little exalted', had a cause which was in itself a natural stimulus to enthusiasm. 'Thus', to quote his friend and contemporary, Louis Schmidt, 'it is not astonishing to see the effect that he had on simple

and honest nations, such as were those of the *métis*, when he revealed to them their most sacred rights trampled under foot in the invasion of their country by Canada'.

After the halting of the 'Canadian' party, the summer passed in meetings and agitation, and the next open act came with the arrival of another survey-party on 20th August. Colonel Dennis did all he could to explain his task; he got permission from Mactavish, he promised that existing rights would not be affected by his survey, and he secured a promise that Lestanc would explain all this in the Roman Catholic Cathedral. He claimed that he inserted a statement in the *Nor' Wester*, and that he gave a full account to Riel, who said he was delighted at the expression of government policy. Dennis was therefore taken aback when, instead of Lestanc explaining the reasonableness of the surveys, Riel addressed the *métis* after service from the church doors, urging them to halt the surveys and saying that they were intended to take the farms from the *métis* and give them to Canadians. Dennis alleged that Riel also urged the people to resist the entrance of the Lieutenant-Governor, but since these events took place in the last week of August and McDougall was not appointed until 28th September Dennis had probably confused his narrative, although the impending appointment was a matter of common talk and speculation. Dennis was, however, right on two points. He himself had done what he could to explain the attitude of the Canadian government (and he began his survey from the American border in an effort to avoid provocation); and Riel and the *métis* leaders, with their clergy, must have known that henceforth they need not worry about their lands. Their interests were to preserve the *métis* nationality. Surveys and land-rights were merely means for stimulating opinion, and in this, despite his good intentions, Colonel Dennis played into their hands by associating with Schultz and the 'Canadian' party.

Opposition to the survey therefore was but a means to an end. Riel was working towards the position which he later enunciated—that the *métis*, once aroused, could be trusted to indicate their rights, and that it was proper to exaggerate their dangers in order to rouse them. In the meantime an American consul was appointed to Winnipeg, and the suave and affable Oscar Malmros arrived to fill that post. He was generally welcomed and his conduct was correct, but his presence was bound to stimulate the American annexationist party and to add to the general feeling that at Red River an important scene was about to be enacted. The uneasy tranquillity of the Company's régime, a tranquillity which arose from close personal

knowledge and sympathy which over-rode constitutional defects, gave way to fretful political activity.

The news that McDougall had been appointed Lieutenant-Governor and the Upper Canadian influence of the Councillors who were nominated increased the fears of Canada. There was no important French-Canadian Councillor. J. A. N. Provencher, who was appointed to be Secretary of the Council, was indeed a nephew of Bishop Provencher, but he had made no mark as yet, and his appointment did nothing to allay the *métis*' uneasiness. It seemed most probable that Upper Canadian interests would dominate the Council, and Dennis's efforts to spread an atmosphere of understanding were negatived by the way in which the priests had decided that they must avoid appearing to be committed on his side (which was the reason why Lestanc had not made the announcement which he had promised), and by his indiscretion in staying with Schultz. *Métis* nationalism therefore focused upon denying the right of a Lieutenant-Governor, who had been imposed from without, to enter 'their' territory. They were at least determined to prevent the new administration from making the colony 'an English province in the image of Ontario'. But first, to emphasise the alleged danger to their land-rights, the survey again came into the picture.

By early October Dennis had quietly completed his survey of a Principal Meridian north from the American boundary to the Assiniboine. Then he began to send parties east and west, to Portage la Prairie and to Oak Point, to survey base-lines from which local surveys could start. The eastward party under Major Webb was forcibly stopped on 11th October (by men standing on the surveyor's chain) when it had reached the 'hay privilege' standing back from the river lots at St. Vital on Red River, St. Vital was Riel's own village and it is clear that the *métis* were acting to a plan of which the important point was to declare that Canada 'had no right to make surveys in the Territory without the express permission of the people of the Settlement'. The stopping of the survey was not the surly opposition of peasants who could not understand its purpose; it was a symbolical gesture, full of a meaning which was understood and accepted.

The English settlers had been reported as even more excited than the *métis* over the early surveys—for they also saw their land-titles under threat—and Abbé Dugas wrote that the English group would resent the arrival of McDougall if he came 'as sent by the Canadian government to rule the country'. But in the event both the English settlers and the English half-breeds abstained from action, while the

French-speaking Roman Catholic *métis* stood forward to challenge the Dominion and, in that it was involved in the transfer, the Company. Already before the survey was stopped at St. Vital 'Two *Métis* Settlers' (probably Riel and Bruce) had written to the *Courier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, that though the *métis* were prepared for the Company to lay down its government they proudly claimed the rights which they had acquired under the Company, and that this was one of a series of resolutions which had been accepted by a meeting of a so-called 'National Committee' to which each parish had sent two elected representatives. Bruce had been elected President of the National Committee, and Riel was Secretary, an oath of mutual loyalty was taken, and the Committee was in control of the only effective, armed and active, force within the settlement when it organised the stopping of the survey.

It went on immediately to the stopping of McDougall himself. Protesting their loyalty to the Crown as well as their determination to vindicate their rights, the *métis* began to assemble on the road to Pembina and the United States, near the church of St. Norbert, where they raised a barrier and searched all travellers. About forty armed men guarded this barrier at the Riviere Sale while another party of about twenty was at the Riviere aux Gratias, the next stream south. Altogether about six hundred men were under arms, but this was to show their solidarity rather than because they were needed. The Reverend N. J. Ritchot allowed the *métis* to use his presbytery at St. Norbert as their headquarters and publicly associated with them, and his part in urging the *métis* to vindicate the 'constitutional rights' was generally acknowledged, both then and later. Though the English settlers held a meeting for the purpose of sending an address of welcome to their Governor-elect, the address was not adopted, for the English were as conscious of their rights as the *métis*; as anxious to enter the Dominion on equal terms with other provinces, and as ready to resent Canada's apparent attitude. They hoped that the Dominion policy, when unfolded, would prove wise and acceptable; in the meantime they withheld their support from the *métis*, and they withheld their welcome from the Governor.

The Council of Assiniboia had met on the same day, 18th October, and had passed an address of welcome to McDougall, assuring him of their loyalty, and of their services as private citizens. The future administration was reminded that it was no small feat to have maintained a small and defenceless state in the midst of the Indians, and to have organised a profitable trade in those circumstances. The Councillors, too, expressed their affectionate regard for

Mactavish and asked that the Governor and Committee should be thanked for their many kindnesses towards the colony. The Councillors were in the process of laying down the authority which the Company had vested in them. The Company had for years protested that real power to deal with an armed crisis was denied to it, and when on 19th October the *métis* raised their barrier and it became clear that the Company's Council was not to be quietly succeeded by McDougall and his councillors, there was little that could be done. The Council, however, tried to use its two *métis* members to talk their compatriots into moderation, and it called Bruce and Riel to a meeting and tried in vain to persuade them to raise the barrier. Even Bishop Machray, who had at first hoped that 'the Movement' would be put down by force, began to doubt whether the English section would either be willing to take up arms, or able to do so effectively, and on his motion the Council sent a message to McDougall advising him not to enter the territory. This seemed the only reasonable course, and the councillors hoped that 'the force of persuasion, or the effect of the cold weather about to close in', would bring about the dispersal of the *métis*.

The message was got off, to meet McDougall at Pembina. Colonel Dennis also set off to meet the Governor-elect, to give him the misleading advice that the prevailing view was indifference, and that it would be unwise to split the colony until the matter had come officially to the Council. This was a more negative and acquiescent view than was justified by the state of the colony as a whole, taking the *métis* as an element, but the impression that the movement was likely to fizzle out was strengthened by the atmosphere at Pembina. There McDougall and his suite had arrived on 30th October. He was allowed to reach the Company's post, but was there given a note to say he would not be allowed to enter the North-west Territory without permission of the National Committee of the *métis*. He seems to have accepted this philosophically and to have settled in at the Company's post to await developments while Provencher trusting to his French blood, and Captain Cameron, trusting to his horses, tried to push on to Fort Garry. Both were turned back at St. Norbert, and it was perhaps as well, for had Cameron crashed the barrier he would probably have been shot. They were taken back to Pembina by an armed escort; and there a strong party of *métis* insisted upon McDougall returning to American territory, a move which he seems to have made without any great protest, though he moved 'much against his will'. He settled down on American territory, in some discomfort, to await the date of the transfer when

he would become official Lieutenant-Governor. This was expected to be on 1st December; but much happened during the intervening month.

Schultz and his friends, for their part, were disconcerted and thrown out of their stride by the resolute and concerted action which the *métis* had taken; in consequence they either had to undertake effective counter-action themselves or to prevail on the Council of Assiniboia to do so. Neither course seemed promising, and the purpose of the Council in awaiting the onset of winter was so obvious that it provoked preventive measures from Riel and the *métis*. Fort Garry was not only well-sited and defensible, with its cannon and its small arms; it also held the only available supply of pemmican which would enable the *métis* to keep in the field through the winter. The fort was not manned by a military garrison, and though Chief Factor William Cowan was warned that the *métis* intended to attack he declined to call out the pensioners and to set one part of the colony against the other. Such a situation was easily exploited by the determined leaders of the *métis*. On 2nd November a strong force, from two to four hundred men, approached the fort from the south, crossed the river and made their way into the fort in small groups until they were in possession. The Company's men protested, but there was no opposition, and Riel told Cowan that the *métis* had taken possession of the fort to protect it—presumably from capture by the Canadian faction.

By this act Riel had secured the possibility of keeping his men organised through the winter; they would not now disperse until they were dispersed by force (or perhaps by agreement). He had also committed his first crime. Up to this point preventing surveys by a Dominion government which had not yet taken over, or resisting the entry of a Governor-elect who had not taken up office, might rank as no more than obstructions of the highway. But the seizure of Fort Garry must be considered as a serious illegality; on any analysis the *métis* had taken forcible possession of property, and refused to yield it up. Though they protested that they had no intention of harming anyone or anything within the fort, and scrupulously kept their word, they kept sentries on guard, questioned all who came or went, and at St. Norbert they stopped all letters though it was alleged that under protest they forwarded the mail intact. Despite their orderliness it was, as even the mild Mactavish said, 'an inconvenience and a danger next to intolerable' to have so many armed men forcibly billeted upon the fort.

In the situation which had been produced by the capture of Fort

Garry the support of the English and 'established' portion of the colony was the stake at issue. A punitive force could not possibly be got up to Red River before the following summer, and by then much would certainly have happened. If McDougall and the Canadian government were to be got to accept the *métis*' right to discuss and agree their terms for admission to the Dominion, it would be because the colony as a whole presented a united front. If, on the other hand, Riel and his supporters were to be turned out from Fort Garry, dispersed and treated as rebels, it must be the English settlers who would act against them. So while the *métis* prevented the sale of spirits, scrupulously respected property, and assured the Governor and Council of Assiniboia of their loyalty, McDougall and 'the Canadas' (as the *métis* called them) were equally anxious to align the establishment on their side. McDougall lost no time in pointing out to Mactavish that he (and the Company) still held official responsibility for public peace, and that he had the duty of preparing the people for the transfer of authority, and of making it possible for McDougall to make his preliminary enquiries. These were, of course, matters which Mactavish might have been expected to have taken care of, if it had been made clear to him at any stage that McDougall was merely coming to make preliminary enquiries, or if he had been given any official information from England or from Canada of the fact of the transfer or the changes which would ensue. He pointed out to McDougall in his reply that the whole business was still marked by vagueness and uncertainty, and he went so far as to advise him to return to Canada, so as to preserve the peace of the country and to facilitate future relations with the Dominion.

Mactavish had been in London in April 1869, when the terms of the transfer were accepted at a general meeting of the shareholders. In view of this and of his visit to Ottawa and his discussions there, he could not pretend complete ignorance of the transfer, and he did not do so. He said he had spoken of it as a matter of common knowledge and had done all he could to keep the peace. But neither he nor the people had received any official intimation of their fate. Even so, the seizure of the fort put him in a quandary, and though he was reluctant to split the colony he could not for ever resist the plea of McDougall and the so-called 'loyalists', that he should issue a proclamation ordering the *métis* to desist from their illegal acts. McDougall in effect decided that the Company must restore order and that Canada must be given a peaceable and orderly access to the territory, and he secured a proclamation by Mactavish, issued on

16th November. Mactavish denounced the obstructions to free and lawful movement, the barrier at St. Norbert and the interference with mails, the occupation of Fort Garry and of the Company's post at Pembina, and above all the threats to resist the transfer, which would mean defiance of royal authority. He charged all who were involved to disperse; but although he threatened the penalties of the law Mactavish's proclamation remained persuasive rather than coercive, and he ended on a paternal note. He urged the assembly to support his proclamation, and he warned them that they were 'dealing with a crisis out of which may come incalculable good or immeasurable evil'.

Though Mactavish's proclamation was published in the *Red River Pioneer*, and in a pirated and abbreviated form in the *Nor' Wester*, and was the subject of much discussion and publicity, he expected very little from it. He wrote to tell the Governor and Committee that he had issued it chiefly in order to impress McDougall. The proclamation, however, sharpened up the issues and marked yet another stage in the movement; for it left Riel to find some excuse for disobeying a Governor whose authority he recognised, and it meant that any further resistance must be rebellion. He was reduced to seek an explanation for continued resistance in the importance of the moment, in a challenge to McDougall to show that he had authority from the Queen (which he would not have until the transfer had taken place) and in the injustice of the transfer being agreed upon without consultation. He was in a legalistic quandary, but he was not unduly disturbed thereby, for he was capable of maintaining his position by saying that 'If we rebel against the Company which sold us and against Canada which wishes to buy us, we do not rebel against the English government, which has not yet given its approval to the actual transfer of the country'.

Riel was in fact quite hopeful that he had begun to get the support of the English. On 6th November the *métis* had published a notice in which they invited their 'friendly fellow Inhabitants' to a meeting on the 16th, and Mactavish's proclamation was actually presented at this joint meeting of the two sections of the settlers. The English protested when they found about a hundred and fifty armed men crowded round the door of the Court House, and when they were greeted by a *feu de joie* and by a salute of twenty-four guns from the fort; and the English wanted the proclamation read first, and the *métis* demurred at this. Much time was spent on fruitless discussion, and the meeting then came to the proclamation just before it adjourned. The adjournment, however, was only until the next day,

and the two parties were not at odds over the fundamental rights and claims of the colony, but over the expediency of allowing McDougall to cross the frontier or not. Feeling was friendly, and throughout the *métis* protested their loyalty to the Queen and to the government of Assiniboia.

The government of Assiniboia really meant the government of the Hudson's Bay Company. That, said Riel, could be recognised only in so far as it existed. But Mactavish was unmistakably in the process of laying down his authority, and though he had told McDougall that he had received no information as to the date of the hand-over this was not to imply that he ever contemplated maintaining Company rule; on the contrary, he strongly advised McDougall that ultimate unity would depend on the way in which Canada approached the problem. Though there were moments at which the *métis* argued that they were content to go on living under Company rule, they also claimed that 'the giving up of the rights of government of the Hudson's Bay Company which has sold out without even saying a word about it, shows us only too harshly how much an irresponsible government makes mock of its subjects'. But the *métis* knew that, whatever its merits or defects, the end of Company rule was in sight, and decided that an alternative government must be formed. On 23rd November they suggested a 'provisional government', for their own protection and to force the Dominion to grant a form of responsible government. But the *métis* could neither agree with the English nor settle on a clear policy of their own.

Failure to secure co-operation with the English was the more serious because, as Riel noted, 'Schultz and the "Canadas" are raising the devil'; and Riel had very little time in which to manoeuvre. He had indeed talked the *métis* into a determination to proceed without the English, and he had committed them to his cause by taking more complete possession of Fort Garry. This was no 'protective custody' such as the first invasion of the fort had been, to save it from harm. From 23rd November onwards, Mactavish and his staff were virtually prisoners, the Company's cash and books were sequestered, and the *métis* took possession of the public accounts and the land register as well as of the 'cash blotter' and the fur trade account of the Company. The difficulty was to anticipate the Company's demise without defying the Company's authority. December 1st was the dead-line. Then, said Riel, 'Assiniboia will be dead, let us form a Provisional Government beforehand. . . . Let us seize the public accounts, the public funds in order to force

McDougall to deal with a public body. Those books and that public money also belong to the public'.

Assuming in advance the character of a provisional government, and taking control of the means of government, the *métis* tried to get control of a consignment of 'government pork' sent from Canada to Schultz's store for the use of the surveyors under Snow (who had been sued in the Quarterly Court by his men in the midst of all the troubles). Riel placed a guard upon the provisions, for such a supply was both a means of keeping forces effective during the winter and something of a quasi-public responsibility. The 'government pork' and the right to protect it helped greatly in this last week of November to produce a clear contest for precedence. Riel and the *métis* held the fort, guarded the pork, and counted themselves a provisional government. Schultz and 'the Canadas' actually had the pork, counted themselves as 'loyalists', and challenged the right of the *métis* to speak for the settlement as a whole. The 'government pork' was the bone round which they snarled, but endless discussions were in progress, with Schultz trying to cut the residential qualification so that recent Canadian and American immigrants might have a voice in the public meetings.

In the disputes a strong party, led by postmaster Bannatyne, suggested that the 'old H.B.C. rule' should continue and eventually, on 27th November, Riel was persuaded to agree that the French and the English should share equally in an executive council (whose duties should be to treat with the Canadian government) while the Company's rule persisted in the form of the old Council. But with the 'government pork' creating all manner of rumours, and with the *métis*' refusal to lay down their arms as a background, there was little hope of a compromise. The confusion and conflict of purpose can well be judged from the report by Alexander Begg of the meeting in the Fire Engine House at which the proposal to continue under Company rule was first put. Schultz had packed the audience but there was a strong counter-force present; and many were armed. There was 'every likelihood of the meeting breaking up in a general row', and as it proceeded 'A great many motions and amendments to motions were made but as it was evident that no agreement could be arrived at on any subject and that it could [not] be ascertained who had the right to vote on resolutions and as certain remarks had been made derogatory to the Chairman by the Schultz party, it was resolved that as the Chairman had been insulted the meeting should adjourn—which was immediately carried out—the meeting separated without a row'.

Agreement to acknowledge the Company's rule while an elected executive council discussed terms with the Dominion brought comfort to many. But the 'government pork question', if nothing else, put real agreement out of the question, and on the last day of November Riel retracted and insisted on the formation of a provisional government and the end of the Company's rule—'the latter because it was dead already and therefore not in force nor able to protect the people'. It seemed most unlikely after this that agreement could be reached, and the English and Scots half-breeds began to prepare their arms and to drill. But it was known that not all the French half-breeds stood behind Riel in his decision, and urgent discussions were continued in an effort to get some common basis for the important meeting of 1st December.

Nothing could be accomplished. On the day on which it was known that the transfer should take place the 'English Delegates' and the 'French Council' were still sitting separately and still in disagreement as to whether McDougall should be allowed to enter the settlement if he would agree to the rights which were claimed, or whether he should be kept out until these rights had been confirmed by an act of the Canadian Parliament. This was a fundamental disagreement, emphasised by the refusal of the English to send delegates to McDougall. Riel angrily told them to go home to their farms, to comfort their wives and to set good examples to their children; the *métis* would vindicate the rights of both communities.

But the two communities were in substantial agreement as to the points which they would include in a 'List of Rights' for acceptance by Canada, and on 1st December they met amicably to discuss a proclamation which McDougall had published on that day. Some such proclamation was fully expected. The Deed of Surrender had been signed by Northcote on 19th November, it had been agreed since August that the transfer should take place on 1st December (not on 1st October, as had been at first proposed), and it was a fair and sensible assumption that the Dominion would pay the money and would take up its responsibilities on that date. In fact arrangements had been made for Messrs. Barings, Glyn Mills, Currie and Company to pay over the £300,000 on 30th November, and the reason why the discussions at Red River had come to such a point on 1st December was that Riel thought that on that day there would come a strategic moment when Mactavish would have laid down the Company's claims to govern but no royal proclamation would yet have announced McDougall's assumption of office. Then would be the moment to set up a provisional government. So Mactavish had

reported to the Governor and Committee, and events bore out his assessment of the situation.

But if Riel was watching for the moment to set up a provisional government, McDougall was watching with equal care to make sure that such an inter-regnum never occurred. For him also 1st December was a day on which Canada must step in on the heels of the Company's abdication, and on the night of 30th November he took two proclamations across the border to read at the Company's post at Pembina, after which he again withdrew to American territory. The first proclamation purported to be the long-awaited 'Queen's Proclamation' and declared that from and after the 1st December, 1869, Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory were part of the Dominion of Canada and McDougall was Lieutenant-Governor (by virtue of his commission of 29th September from the Governor-General). The second proclamation announced McDougall's entry upon office and called upon all officers of the colony, save Mactavish as Governor to continue their public duties. McDougall sent copies of these proclamations to the settlement, on the morning of 1st December, by the hand of Colonel Dennis, whom he appointed his deputy with power to raise a local force and to suppress any insurgents.

This was the means by which McDougall's proclamations came before the English and the French sections of the community, and left them divided. Mactavish was reported to have accepted the 'proclamations' as ending his governorship and to have announced the end of the Council of Assiniboia. There is no evidence for such a formal act, but the English delegates treated the first proclamation as 'The Queen's Proclamation' and took it to the French as such. It does not seem to have deceived Riel who, from his own account, laughingly disparaged it as soon as he saw it and finally concluded that 'If Mr. McDougall is really our governor today, our chances are better than ever. He has no more to do than prove to us his desire to treat us well'. In truth the proclamation, as a 'Queen's Proclamation', was quite spurious, and this McDougall and Provencher knew when they uttered it.

They were, probably in all honesty, trying to anticipate what ought to have happened. But whereas they assumed that the essential 'Queen's Proclamation' had not come up to them because of administrative incompetence and indifference, the real reason was that the actual transfer had not taken place as they had expected, and as they roundly stated in the proclamation. Even had the Company laid down its authority on that day there remained the possibility (as

Howe pointed out) that an interval of as much as a month might intervene between the surrender to the Crown and a proclamation uniting the territories with Canada. But the Company had not surrendered its territories to the Crown, for when John Macdonald had been informed that McDougall had been prevented from entering the territories he had cabled to London to instruct the Canadian representative there, the Hon. John Rose, not to pay over the £300,000 on 1st December. The money was already deposited with the bankers, but Rose arranged that it should not be paid over until Canada could secure peaceable possession at Red River. Neither McDougall nor anyone else knew this on 1st December at Red River; indeed the Company had only been informed of the hold-up, in London, on the previous day.

It would probably have made very little difference if the breakdown had been known, for with all the skirmishing over 'government pork' and Company's money and books, the semi-agreement on Lists of Rights and the quite genuine personal friendliness (as well as the animosities) between the communities, the main difference stood out clear. Riel and the *métis* refused to allow McDougall to enter the territory until a Canadian Act of Parliament had registered an agreement with the settlement. Yet the effect of Canada's refusal to take over until peace had been restored was to prolong the Company's rule. Although Mactavish was referred to as 'ex-governor' after McDougall's proclamation had become known and all (including himself) at Red River assumed that he had laid down his authority and ended Company rule, in fact the Company was still responsible.

The Company protested strongly and pleaded that if Canada refused responsibility the home government should exercise direct authority, and claimed interest on the £300,000. The case was so reasonable that the Colonial Secretary in a quandary turned to the Law Officers of the Crown to discover the legal position. In the meantime he expressed the view that the claim for interest was reasonable, and he delayed action until the outcome of a mission from Canada should be known.

But Mactavish and the Company counted for little. It was not to be expected that they should control the situation save by personal loyalties. In his way Mactavish exercised much influence for moderation; but he was desperately sick of tuberculosis, and dispirited; and he was with Bannatyne and the English section who thought 'it was sufficient to take Mr. McDougall's word that all would be done for them that was just and reasonable'.

Mactavish hoped, even on 1st December, that the winter might continue without a major crisis, but he was afraid that spring would bring hordes of trouble-makers from Minnesota and Dakota. There was already a recognisable American element at Red River, and there are grounds for discerning an American influence in the List of Rights which the half-breeds drew up; there was at least one reputed Fenian too, William O'Donoghue, who was something of a secessionist; and an Irish tough called Timmy from Cork who got drunk and boisterous on occasions. But as yet no serious issue had arisen save that of settling the procedure by which the settlement should be admitted to the Dominion. But if the *métis* were to hold out and gain their point they must remain in arms, and in control of Fort Garry; and they must be kept under control. Inevitably the régime became increasingly martial. And as discipline seemed to require action to offset it, Riel led a small force out from Fort Garry to capture Schultz's house at Winnipeg, complete with its garrison of forty-eight men, its women, and the 'government pork' which they had assembled to guard.

Schultz and his party were too near to Fort Garry for there to be much hope that such an incident would not occur, and once force had been used in this manner there could be no going back. Dennis had ordered the 'Canadiens' to withdraw from Schultz's store, but his orders were disregarded, for it was the 'Canadiens' policy to provoke the *métis* to actions in which they would appear as rebels and rioters. Dennis himself was at a safe distance from the centre of trouble, at Lower Fort Garry. He had sent away some 'Canadien' volunteers, saying that he hoped to settle the difficulties amicably, and had left an opportunity for discussion. But as Riel took closer control and the *métis* assumed a more martial aspect Dennis published his commission and called for volunteers. His call was answered by the loyalists, christianised, Swampy Indians of St. Peter's Parish, and more slowly by the English settlers. At the same time McDougall sent a half-breed, Joseph Monkman, to get support from the Indian tribes of the Lake of the Woods region to the east of Red River. This was perhaps no more than a tactical move, designed to secure an easy passage to any relief force which might be sent up from Canada, but it also became known that McDougall had made contact from Pembina with the Indians of the Red River area. Then news arrived from Portage la Prairie that over a thousand of the Sioux were on their way to the settlement. It seemed that Canada was rallying the Indians against the settlers. A Town Company for protection was formed while, on 4th December, the *métis* at

Fort Garry broke open the Company's warehouse and helped themselves to some pemmican and to some bags of ball. The movement was steadily getting out of hand.

Dennis at the Lower Fort advised everyone to keep calm, and on no account to fire a shot, and he tried to dispel the impression that the 'loyalists' were preparing to use force, and even to rouse the Indians, by declaring that it was not the intention to send troops into the settlement. Still the *métis* had reason for alarm, and their reaction was on the whole sensible. While the men relieved the tedium of garrison duty in Fort Garry by running foot races, the leaders again publicised their 'List of Rights', with emphasis on the use of French as well as English as the official language, respect for their privileges and customs, fair representation in the Canadian Parliament and an elected Legislature. Among other more material demands (such as a free Homestead and pre-emption Land Law) they asked for a guarantee that Winnipeg would be connected by rail to the nearest line of railroad within five years.

But though many elements in the community were advising tolerance and moderation, all considered themselves lucky when the 'Canadiens' in Schultz's house had surrendered and been disarmed. The conduct of Riel and the *métis* was exemplary; but Schultz and his companions, and even their women-folk (at their own insistence) were marched off to custody in Fort Garry. It had been a notable triumph for the *métis*, and when it was over Bruce and Riel issued a Declaration of their purpose. Once more they protested their adherence to the Company and its government; but 'from the day on which the Government we always respected abandoned us—by transferring to a strange power the sacred authority confided to it', they protested that they were free and would oppose with all their strength all attempts by Canada 'to enforce its obnoxious policy upon us by force of arms'. They were ready to negotiate with Canada to secure the good government and prosperity of the people, but if Dennis and his volunteers at the Lower Fort increased their efforts and challenged Riel, blood would surely flow. The Protestant Bishop Robert Machray, the Presbyterian Minister John Black, the American Consul, and the English leader James Ross, all pressed Dennis to 'keep quiet', and eventually he agreed to 'be guided by voice of people'. With Bannatyne as intermediary he issued a proclamation calling on the loyalists to cease from further action and calling on the *métis* to send a deputation to McDougall at Pembina. Then he set off towards Portage la Prairie with the further intention of turning the Sioux away from the settlement, and thence made his

way to Pembina. There McDougall was waiting in a chastened mood. On 6th December he had received warning from John A. Macdonald that as yet he was no more than a private citizen seeking admission to a country under another government, and Joseph Howe had also warned him that he could claim no authority until the 'Queen's Proclamation' reached him through the medium of Howe, as Secretary of State. McDougall therefore awaited a move from the *métis*, and so far demeaned himself as to make the first move in a letter to Riel. He got no response, and on 18th December he set out on his return to Canada, 'the most discredited politician in the history of British North America'.

In London, in the meantime, the Company had learned (mostly by Trans-Atlantic cable) that the Canadian Government wished Company rule to continue, and that the Colonial Office had been told that the Canadians were most anxious not to have to impose Dominion rule by force upon a reluctant population. The Dominion would only take over after order had been restored. Reports from Mactavish, as yet, carried them only up to the start of the troubles, to 9th November, and they were forced to tell him that the transfer had not gone through on 1st December, as planned. By mid-January they knew the story up to 14th December and were busy informing the Colonial Office, and countering scare-stories in *The Times* and other newspapers about the Sioux and about the capture of Fort Garry. There followed the news that Colonel Dennis had called off his appeal to the loyalists, and then that Canada had agreed to send a commission to investigate and to reassure the *métis*—the Very Reverend T. B. Thibeault, Vicar-General of St. Boniface, and Colonel Charles de Salaberry. Both were men long experienced in the North-west, and respected and popular among the *métis*. The choice of persons was wise, but when the commissioners set out from Ottawa on 4th December events at Red River had already outpaced them. Their main task, as instructed in an interview with several members of the Canadian government, was to reassure the *métis*, to tell them that they had neither been bought nor sold by the Company, that they were not consulted merely because communications were inadequate, that the government would not be despotic, that representative institutions would be established as soon as possible, and that every effort would be used to prevent any attempt by the United States to aid the *métis* in setting up republican institutions. They were also empowered to say that tariffs would be moderate, and would compare favourably with those of the United States, and they were given a much more reasonable 'Queen's Proclamation'

than that promulgated by McDougall—a proclamation which had the added advantage of being authentic.

Granville, faced with the possibility that his plans would founder, had sent out a draft proclamation which was promulgated by Governor-General Sir John Young on 6th December. Wise and moderate, this proclamation appealed to the loyalty of the North-west, ascribed the troubles to mis-representation, and promised respect for rights, government 'under British laws, and in the spirit of British justice', and redress for all grievances. Those under arms were called upon to disperse and return to their homes. Had such a proclamation come a week earlier it would, without doubt, have done as much good as McDougall's brash effort did harm. But even this proclamation was useless in the situation which McDougall had created. The *métis* now wanted, not reassurance but some emissary from Canada who was empowered to treat with them and to settle the terms, as between the Dominion and the provisional government, on which they should enter the Dominion.

The reason why the Commissioners were so powerless was largely because John A. Macdonald was confident that the *métis* movement would soon collapse. It was for him a question of biding out time and making conciliatory gestures, and while he refused for the moment to allow the Dominion to take over control he protested with little force or effect against the Colonial Office's suggestion that the Company should be entitled to interest on the £300,000 which ought to have been paid over on 1st December. This was almost to acknowledge that the actual transfer had taken place as planned, and Macdonald protested throughout that Canada had no intention of breaking the agreement. He had, however, taken a last minute chance to delay and to claim that peace within the settlement was a condition of the assumption of rule by the Dominion though it was not a condition of the laying down of rule by the Company. The Company protested that the difficulties had been caused solely by Canada's ineptitude and pressed for the transfer to go through. Although Canada protested against payment of interest, the fact that the Colonial Office supported the claim is of the greatest significance.

For the Company the end of rule had been reached. From this time forward there is indeed a succession of incidents in which the Company was concerned, but real power and responsibility had ceased. The Colonial Office was in reluctant nominal control, and it was accepted that 'Government of the Company was virtually put an end to by Mr. MacDougall's proclamations'. But at Red River the

Company was still the only economic power, whatever the constitutional position, and Riel turned to the only source of currency at his disposal and demanded a loan of £1,000 from Mactavish to the provisional government. When Mactavish properly refused, the *métis* took over the Company's safe with its contents of £1,090, chiefly in denominations of the Company's own notes. Goods from the Company's shops were also taken, against receipts, a further loan of £10,000 was demanded, and the Company's trade was completely held up. Later, in February as Riel began to get more genuinely rebellious and authoritarian, he demanded an oath of allegiance from the Company's officers and threatened to shoot Chief Factor Dr. W. Cowan. He put Mactavish and all the Company's officers under close arrest, sacked the shop at St. Boniface, and even held up the outfit upon which the trade and subsistence of the Saskatchewan posts depended. The *métis* were becoming more markedly hostile to the Company, and as it appeared more and more improbable that Canada would take the provisional government at its own valuation and negotiate with it on equal terms there emerged an element which was outspokenly in favour of annexation to the United States.

From these developments the Company stood aloof, although its property and its officials were involved. Pointing out that it had for long protested its inadequacy to govern the settlement, the Company deprecated Granville's delay of the transfer. It drew attention to the fact that McDougall had issued his proclamations and so might be assumed to have taken control, and it claimed that an indefinite continuance was quite unacceptable; it would in any case want to know for how long it was expected to rule and (since it had itself laid down its authority) on whose behalf it was to govern—on behalf of the Dominion or of the home government.

Since the Company insisted that it had laid down authority and responsibility on 1st December, it was the more remarkable that the final solution at Red River was so largely influenced by a Company's officer, Donald Smith, the Company's agent at Montreal. Donald A. Smith, nephew of Chief Factor John Stuart, had joined the Company in 1838 with a warning from his knowing uncle that the best way to achieve advancement under Simpson was hard work and 'deference to the point of humility'. His early years in the trade had been spent in the dull and unprofitable lower St. Lawrence posts; after three years at Lachine, Smith was sent as a clerk to Tadoussac and served in succession at Godbout, Seven Islands, Bersimis and Mingan, until in 1848 he was transferred to North West River on the Labrador Coast. For twenty years Donald Smith served as 'a

mere Labrador man' (as he called himself), becoming a Chief Trader in 1851 and taking command of that district in 1853 although he did not become a Chief Factor until 1863. In the same year as he took command in Labrador he married the daughter of the former district officer, Richard Hardisty; it was her second marriage, the first having been 'according to the custom of the country' and having been dissolved. Simpson blessed the new union.

Neither the fur trade of Labrador nor domestic life absorbed Smith's energies. The district had been greatly extended from the Eastmain ventures of the early years of the nineteenth century. Survey parties had pioneered penetration into the interior and so to the Atlantic coast, and opposition from petty traders, fishermen and lumbermen had been met and overcome by the methods which Simpson brought to bear against similar opposition in the King's Posts, or in Lake la Pluie District. Eskimo Bay and Ungava (Fort Chimo) were the posts on which the Company's efforts focused; martens were the chief product, but they fell off badly in the early years of Smith's régime. It was a district in which shipping problems, the closing of posts for recuperative periods, relations with the Eskimoes and Indians, who were still at feud, and the choice between coastal and inland establishments, were all active problems, and Donald Smith steadied and increased the trade year by year. He did much more. With an insistence upon economy which exceeded even Simpson's (though he himself entertained generously), Smith broadened the trade into salmon fisheries, he began farming, and he improved the transport routes. All the time he was reading and thinking, and enjoying a wide circle of correspondents. He emerged with a very considerable reputation, and with the conviction that the opening of the prairies ('the country from Fort William Westward to the Red River, and even a considerable distance beyond') was inevitable and that, for himself his heart, or a large part of it, 'was in the west'.

As the new Committee was shaping policy after the sale to the International Financial Society, Smith, now a Chief Factor, took his turn of furlough in London in 1864-5. He concluded that the new directors were not over-much concerned with the fate of the fur-traders, and when he had glimpsed something of the chances of profitable investment as he passed through Montreal on his return to Labrador he began investing his own savings and those of his friends in the fur trade in a far more profitable way than the Company had hitherto managed. His private account did 'not shew an

encouraging appearance for a trip to England in 1868', but he arrived in London in February 1869. He knew the London end of the Deed of Surrender negotiations and when he returned to command Montreal District in 1869 (for he had made a good impression on the Committee), he was near the centre of Canadian activity. He was also well-placed as a shrewd investor of the savings of a rapidly-increasing group of fur-traders. The Company did not mind Smith advising on investments, but objected most strongly to his carrying on this task as a business. Smith continued his investment activities. He was important, was rapidly becoming wealthy himself, and was on the whole (though not always) a successful agent for his colleagues.

At the end of November 1869, as Canada refused to take up responsibility for rule at Red River and as Thibeault and de Salaberry were given their instructions for the pacification of Red River, John A. Macdonald summoned Smith from Montreal to Ottawa. As yet Macdonald was not aware that his first two commissioners would prove unable to remedy the troubles at Red River, since they had not been given any decisive authority, and his actions at this time emphasise the uncertainty as to who was really responsible for law and administration. He turned to Smith partly as the representative of the Company, for Smith was acting as *locum tenens* for Edward Hopkins who had succeeded Simpson as the Company's chief officer. Smith had as yet no personal experience of the North-west, but his knowledge was wide, and he knew the Company's side of the situation. It was his cousin George Stephen, beginning to rise to importance in banking and business circles in Montreal, who suggested Smith to Macdonald, saying that Smith had information which might be of service to the government. Smith had been instructed to communicate to the Canadian government the accounts which the Company had received from Mactavish of the troubles which were brewing up over surveys and land-titles, and when Macdonald had heard Smith's account he immediately took a more serious view of the problem, and decided that a third, Protestant, commissioner was necessary to allay the fears of the Protestant and English settlers. When George Stephen had refused the job, Macdonald turned to Smith, and on 10th December appointed him a Special Commissioner.

In the appointment there was something of a desire to revive the authority of the Company and to insist that it was the Company's duty to preserve the peace until the transfer had been effected and the Dominion had assumed that responsibility; and the Prime

Minister reproached the Hudson's Bay man for the way in which the Company had let the situation get out of hand. But Smith's commission came from the Canadian government; he was to 'go as a sort of Commissioner and in his capacity as an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company'. He was to enquire into the causes of the troubles and to secure the peaceful transfer of the territory, to arrange for the dispersal of the insurgents and the dissolution of their Committee, and if necessary to placate them with offers of posts on the Council or in the police. Much was left to his judgment, but he was able to speak with authority and his position was strengthened by the fact that the genuine, and moderate, Royal Proclamation had arrived before he set off on 13th December. Tariff policy had also been modified, and the existing tariff in the settlement had been guaranteed for two years.

At base, Smith's purpose was to rally moderate, English, and Company support against the mounting extremism of Riel. He arrived at the end of December 1869 and, concealing the character of his mission, did not even tell Mactavish more than that 'there was some probability of his being appointed a commissioner to settle the matter in dispute'. He side-stepped the question whether he recognised the provisional government or not, and so gained admission to Fort Garry while Vicar-General Thibeault was confined to the Bishop's Palace and Colonel de Salaberry was detained at Pembina. There followed a period of intrigue, until about the middle of January, during which Smith worked on the fears of those who thought Riel was going too far, on the loyalty of many to the Company, and on the poverty of those whom Riel could not afford to pay for garrison duties but whom Smith engaged as tripmen and for other jobs. On 14th January the force of opinion which Smith had rallied was such that Riel had to concede Smith's claim to speak as a Commissioner. So Richard Hardisty, Smith's brother-in-law, was sent to Pembina for the copy of his Canadian commission, which Smith had left behind there, and the document was brought safe to Fort Garry on 18th January. This was a grave defeat for Riel, since not only had Smith achieved a position in which it had seemed necessary to allow him his official status as a representative of Canada but an attempt to kidnap the papers, in case they might be unacceptable, had failed. Riel himself had been concerned in the kidnap attempt, which resulted in a threat to shoot him, uttered by a *métis* in Smith's employ.

Smith was playing for a meeting at which he could publish the terms of his commission and make the conciliatory attitude of Canada

clear; he had secured from Macdonald the power to make several promises which should not be concessions wrung from him but should 'take the form of original intentions of the Government'. Riel, on the other hand, appears to have become openly hostile to the Company but to have been genuinely in favour of the Canadian connection and to have little enthusiasm for annexation to the United States. He was, however, forced to safeguard the position of his provisional government as the body which could negotiate terms with the Dominion, he was bound to resent any move which threatened to alienate French or English from the provisional government, he wanted the Americans in the background as a counterpoise to Canada, and he suffered the difficulties and the personal ambitions inevitable in his position.

It was a signal victory for Donald Smith when a general meeting of the settlement met on 19th January, 1870, to hear him read his commission and explain his purpose. He was to speak direct to the settlers as the emissary of Canada, not through the medium of Riel or the provisional government, though Riel was there with the limited function of acting as interpreter. In a five-hours meeting Smith quite carried the day, and he confirmed his victory at an adjourned meeting on the next day. The settlement was really won when Smith succeeded in reading the concessions which he had got from Macdonald. They were embodied in a personal letter, but Riel's objections were over-ridden and the assembly heard that they could rely on respect and protection being shown to their different religions, that titles to property would be guarded and that 'Right shall be done in all cases'. Amid cheers Smith dissociated himself completely from McDougall and his party; he played upon the attachments of his Scottish blood, of his wife's native birth, and he assured his hearers that although he came as the Commissioner of Canada he was only willing to act in the interest of 'this country', even to the extent of resigning from the Hudson's Bay Company if that would in any way help. Such talk achieved a great success among people who were already convinced that their best, indeed their only, plan was 'first loyalty to Britain and a desire to treat with and enter into the Dominion of Canada under proper terms'. Riel had been ousted from the lead, but Smith did not press home his triumph. Whether by arrangement or not, he only read out the covering letter to Governor Mactavish and not the full text of the 'Queen's Proclamation' of 6th December, which would have made the provisional government illegal; but he read the instructions to McDougall and made it appear that even on that

occasion the Dominion had been moderate and exploratory in its approach.

Riel seems to have been genuinely convinced that his object of bringing the settlement into the Dominion on suitable terms could be achieved by negotiation with Canada. But he was not prepared to conduct those negotiations on the spot with the commissioners. So he put himself once more into the leadership and united both the French and English behind him when he secured a vote that a Convention of forty (twenty French and twenty English) should consider what should next be done. Considerable agreement had been achieved in this Convention, by early February, on the 'List of Rights' which should be put forward. But first Riel thought it necessary to prove that the *métis* had created, and could vindicate, a workable government; and to show that the colony entered the Dominion as a complete political entity. Three points were essential in such a programme, and Riel put them in turn to the Convention.

First, he objected to the 'List of Rights' clause which would have admitted the colony with the status of a Territory and insisted that it must rank as a Province. Then he proposed that the transfer from the Company to the Dominion should be annulled and that the negotiations should begin again, as between Canada and the Northwest. The Convention rejected both of these points, and so Riel came to his third and most important step. He demanded that the Convention should recognise his provisional government, and he showed considerable violence in attempting to carry this all-important point, threatening to shoot Dr. Cowan and arresting him, putting a guard on Mactavish, and arresting Bannatyne. The charges were apparently of bribing members of the Council. Such acts were not only directed against the leaders of the group which was most likely to dispute his claims; they were also designed to show that the Company's authority was 'if not dead, completely powerless', and the provisional government was the only effective power in the colony. But a revised 'List of Rights' had already been drawn up and laid before the commissioners, and Smith and the others had suggested that a delegation be sent to Canada. Mactavish advised 'For God's sake, have any form of Government which will restore peace and order', but he refused to delegate his own authority. Such as it was, whether it was in fact superseded by Canada, was resigned to the British government, or was still in nominal control, the Company's authority could not be delegated to Riel.

But if the Company was forced to retain responsibility until it

was officially and legally superseded, the English as individuals knew that some form of interim rule was needed. So they agreed to enter a provisional government, and a draft scheme was drawn up. Riel had to threaten force in order to secure his own election as President of the provisional government, and he was so carried away at this time that he named the colony's delegates to Canada and got the Convention to elect them although it was vital to his programme (and he afterwards strenuously maintained the proposition) that the delegates should be sent from the provisional government, not from the Convention. He had, however, formed a provisional government, he had secured his own position as its President, and he had put negotiations with Canada in the hands of three of its representatives—the Reverend N. J. Riehtot, Alfred Scott, and Judge Black.

The threat of armed intervention, and a great deal of irascibility, had played their parts in securing this triumph for Riel, but there seemed enough of reasonableness, and enough desire not to split the colony, for the common solution to be within grasping distance. Then as the Convention was dissolved and the colony gave itself up to celebration of the agreed solutions, news began to arrive that three separate armed bands were marching on Fort Garry to release the prisoners who had been kept there ever since Riel had taken Schultz's house some three weeks ago. Riel had demurred at a general release but had allowed a few to depart in order to placate the English. On 9th January about a dozen had got safely away to Portage la Prairie and there had found a fair band of 'Canadien' sympathisers, and on 10th February came news that about two hundred of these men were on the march to free the other prisoners.

In the meantime Schultz also had escaped and had made his way to Kildonan, and Riel had begun to release the rest of the prisoners on condition that they should not disturb the peace or oppose the provisional government. The march from Portage la Prairie might therefore have ceased and the men might have gone home had they been clear in their purpose and had they wanted only to release the prisoners. But they were men who deeply resented the predominance of Riel and who had throughout opposed the formation of provisional government. Some sort of plan for a co-ordinated march on Fort Garry seems to have been adopted, in which the party from Portage la Prairie was to continue its march to Fort Garry, Schultz was to lead a party from Kildonan, and another party was to march up from the south. Riel however captured the messenger who should have co-ordinated the attacks (and was reported to have shot him

though the man was actually released), and so the joint attack failed. But the large party from the Portage marched through Winnipeg on the night of 14th February, to join up with the party from Kildonan. They searched a house where Riel might well have been found, but they did not attack Fort Garry, and they then withdrew to Kildonan to consider their next move, and remained there until 16th February while Riel, hurt and angry but not yet afraid, was persuaded to continue to release the prisoners so long as they promised not to oppose the provisional government.

But then the first blood was shed in the whole movement, and the gaps between the settlers began to widen. A *métis* suspected of being a spy for Riel was captured and, in escaping, mortally wounded Hugh Sutherland, son of a settler at East Kildonan. The *métis* was recaptured, and fatally and brutally wounded. Then a message from the Presbyterian priest at Kildonan, the Reverend John Black, threatened the withdrawal of English support from the provisional government.

It seemed that the unity of the settlement was split, and the English might form their own provisional government. Moderation however prevailed, the Portage party decided to disperse to their homes, for the prisoners after all had been freed, and Riel agreed that the proposal to disperse was a good one (it was later emphasised that he did not formally assent to it) as long as their route did not bring them past Fort Garry. But the chances of a level-headed dispersal, and that the death of young Sutherland might be passed over, were ruined when the men marching off to their homes were surprised and captured and brought as prisoners to Fort Garry. Riel does not appear to have agreed formally that they should be allowed to go in peace, merely to have said it was a good suggestion that they should keep away from the fort; on the other hand, he does not seem to have made any definite plan to capture them. The whole episode seems to have been spontaneous and irresponsible; but Riel took advantage of it to bring pressure to bear on the English.

The nearest approach among the captured to a leader of the opposition was the surveyor Captain Boulton, who had assumed some sort of command of the party simply to prevent it from getting out of hand. He gave Riel the chance to demonstrate that the provisional government was the only effective authority in the territory, and that those who took arms against it would be treated as rebels and traitors. Boulton and three companions were tried, unheard in their own defence, by a court-martial and condemned to death. The object was, apparently, partly to overawe the English, partly to prove to

Canada that the provisional government was in authority and must be the voice of the settlement.

The verdict cast a vast gloom over the whole settlement, and numerous interventions were made on behalf of the condemned men. The other three—if indeed three others besides Boulton were ever condemned—appear to have been pardoned without great trouble, but Riel held out for execution of Boulton. But in the end he accepted the pleas of Father Lestanc and of Donald Smith, and agreed that Boulton should be spared if Smith could persuade the English parishes to elect representatives to the provisional government. Smith, able to urge his case both as a Special Commissioner from Canada and as an officer of the Company worked hard, and the English parishes responded. Boulton's life was spared, and by his increasingly captious use of force and threats Riel had once more restored, at least in outward form, the unity of the settlement and the leadership of the provisional government. But he was suffering from the strain of his campaign, and towards the end of February he was reported to have suffered an attack of 'brain fever'.

Schultz and the leaders of the opposition were in fact fleeing from the settlement, by way of St. Paul to Canada, and Riel might well have closed the incident with his enemies dispersed and himself not only in authority but using that authority with some magnanimity. He did not, however, know that Schultz was in flight, and his doubt and uncertainty led to the shooting of Thomas Scott, an action poised between petulant indecision and purposeful resolution, almost impossible to understand fully yet decisive for Riel and his movement, and throwing into relief the quandary of that movement.

A Protestant Irishman with Orange affiliations, young Scott had never been an easy man to deal with. He had come to Red River from Canada in 1869 and had taken part in the work of the survey parties. He had quarrelled with the surveyor John Snow and had been condemned and fined for an aggravated assault on his employer. He had then joined the 'Canadiens' guarding the 'government pork' at Schultz's house, had been captured, and had escaped from Fort Garry to become something of a leader of the party from Portage la Prairie to release the other prisoners. As the party dispersed he was captured for the second time, with Captain Boulton and the others, and with his character and history it was not to be expected that he would be anything but a defiant and truculent prisoner.

There was nothing criminal or weak in Scott, but when he was accused before a 'court-martial' of insubordination and striking his

guards, there was probably some truth in the charges. But these were not offences punishable by death, and the death-sentence imposed and inexorably executed is difficult to explain on any completely rational basis. Donald Smith again tried to intervene, this time with no success; it appears that Scott's insubordination had reached a point at which the *métis* guards might easily have shot him in anger and so a judicial execution was decreed to avoid bloodshed. Riel himself, at a later stage, said that the execution was to preserve order and to vindicate the authority of government. This, in a numbed shocked way, the settlers accepted. There were no more risings against the provisional government, the delegates were despatched to negotiate with Canada, and order reigned, albeit uneasily.

Peace at Red River was greatly helped by the return of Bishop Taché, who had called at London to consult the Governor and Committee on his way back from Rome and who had also been consulted by the Canadian statesmen at Ottawa. Taché had been given to understand that he might announce a general amnesty for any acts during the insurrection, and that the Canadian government would shoulder responsibility for any goods or stores taken by the insurgents. He arrived at St. Boniface on 9th March, five days after the execution of Scott, and Riel was then so unsure of himself that he confined the Bishop to the Palace. Taché was in a strong position, with an amnesty in his pocket and with the task of pacifying the settlement and reconciling it to admission into the Dominion. He soon achieved a reconciliation with Riel and then convinced the Legislative Council of the settlement that he was empowered to speak on behalf of Canada and that Canada wished to receive the delegates and to discuss terms with them. A moving sermon—so moving that it even affected the Bishop himself as he delivered it—greatly furthered the general desire for peace and tolerance, and the release of several of the prisoners also helped. The Bishop roundly condemned the doings of McDougall and Dennis, assured the Council that Canada would deal fairly, read out a telegraph from Howe (as Secretary of State for the Provinces) with the welcome news that Canada saw nothing very difficult in the *métis* 'List of Rights' and that all could be arranged satisfactorily.

Riel, stating that he was ready to relinquish his position as President of the provisional government 'as soon as a proper governor came', fell in with the Bishop's plans and mood. There was every prospect of a speedy union with Canada, and the American annexationist party was at a discount; the delegates for Ottawa left on 23rd and 24th March and the commissioners from Canada were also on

their way, their task being virtually accomplished and best left in the Bishop's hands. Donald Smith left on 19th March. 'His mode of conveyance was by a train of dogs'. There were still rumblings over the flag to be flown from Fort Garry, there were scares that large bands of Indians were about to march on the settlements; and a great deal of discussion was still continuing about the constitution of the provisional government.

All of these elements in the situation were working against a background of spring. In the early days of March, just before the arrival of the Bishop, the *métis* had intended to throttle the Company's trade by preventing the Company from getting pemmican to provision the brigades for the upper posts. The move was not made, and as the Bishop began to make his influence felt there was a chance to think about the extent to which the colony still depended on the Company and the need to get trade moving again as the thaw set in. It was noted that gold and silver had almost disappeared from circulation, many people were so gloomy that they spoke of leaving the colony in the spring, and the 'stoppage of the H.B.C. money box' was greatly felt—that is, the refusal of the Company's officers to issue any more Company notes after Riel had taken complete possession of the Company's post, goods and cash. By mid-March even Riel could see the quandary to which the settlement would be reduced if the Company did not trade through the spring and summer, and was talking of 'reinstating the H.B.C. as a commercial body at once'. Having liberated the last of the prisoners on 20th March, Riel began to talk of handing Fort Garry back to the Company, and all parties began to look forward to the resumption of business. But though the delegates were safely on their way and there seemed little doubt of the ultimate issue, intrigues were still afoot. There were rumours of secret additions to the 'List of Rights', and indeed the List was revised without consulting the English members, the Bishop was becoming more outspoken in criticism of the *métis*, as were the Swampy Crees, the Sioux were reported to be in arms, and opposition (and even criticism) had to be silenced.

Restoring the Company 'on a commercial basis' would have meant the return of civil law, the end of arbitrary rule and of Riel's power. Yet Riel was in direct correspondence with Mactavish about the Company resuming business, and he was without any doubt fully conscious of the need to get the economic life of the community flowing once more. There was, of course, a certain amount of political by-play and Riel secured an agreement that the whole of the Company's staff in the North-west should recognise the

provisional government, a loan of £3,000 from Mactavish, and a promise of a further £2,000 and £4,000 of military supplies if the negotiations with Canada should go badly. And having made his offer to open trade he published that part of his correspondence with Mactavish, so that it should appear as though the Company was the cause of the delay. Yet, even as he signed an agreement with Mactavish, Riel delayed handing over the keys of the fort and by the spring packet to the north he sent out a circular letter to the inhabitants of the North and North-west, to explain to them the conduct of the provisional government and to claim their loyalty and support, and in some sort to call them to union. 'Notre pays, si heureusement entouré par la Providence de barrières naturelles et presque infranchissables, nous appelle à l'union', he wrote; he may have been referring to Red River only as 'notre pays', or he may have had in mind the wider areas of the North-west to whose inhabitants he was writing. He was in any case appealing for support, and he was certainly thinking and writing in terms of 'tous les peuples du Nord-Ouest' and not merely of Red River.

Nevertheless the keys of the fort were at last handed over on 8th April, and a messenger was sent to the interior to spread the news that the Company was in business again. This, once more, was to place the onus upon the Company, for if the Indians up-country were kept short of trade and blamed it upon the *métis* there was a possibility that there might be trouble. Then on 9th April the Company issued its first bill of exchange since Riel had seized the cash box, and while the Company's men took an inventory behind closed doors, and hoped to start trading within a week, Riel signified the return of civil government and the end of the emergency by a proclamation which declared that the public highways were open, promised an amnesty to all who would submit to the provisional government, and announced that 'The Hudson's Bay Company can now resume business. Themselves contributing to the public good, they circulate their money as of old. They pledge themselves to that course'.

It was 28th April, all the same, before the Company's store was open for business. Mactavish's health mended with better weather, and the clerks worked well. But it would have been contrary to their habits, and to the whole tradition of the Company, to have opened shop before the long inventory was completed and the accounts checked. The delay was marked by considerable tension and drunkenness, and Riel recovered a good deal of popularity when he ordered the Union Jack to be flown at the Fort despite secessionist

protests. Then, with the store open, the Company printed and issued pound notes, and then five shilling notes, five pound notes, and even ten pound notes. The river opened up and the Company's steamer, the *International*, took her first load of furs for Georgetown; and the winterers began to come in with their furs and trade.

The Company was ending its period of rule at Red River most appropriately, its trading importance giving it a function in the community which all recognised and which it was prepared to fulfil regardless of political bias. For Riel, however, the situation was not even yet clear, and news from Canada seems to have made him wonder whether he might not still need the Company as a governmental institution. He was still harping upon the theme that the Company had neglected and betrayed its duties by selling the settlement, and yet the possibility of insisting that the Company's government must remain valid until it had been laid down with the consent of the governed remained in his mind.

The last phase was gravely endangered by events over which the Company had no control, and for which it had no responsibility. The delegates from Red River had reached Canada shortly after the news of the shooting of Thomas Scott. Protestant and English-speaking Ontario was in an uproar, fanned by speeches from Schultz and Mair and other refugees, and demanding a military expedition to enforce Canada's authority. The delegates were smuggled to Ottawa by way of Buffalo, but Richtot and Alfred Scott were then arrested on a warrant sworn by Thomas Scott's brother, accusing them of complicity in murder. It was this news which made Riel so restless towards the end of April, for if the provisional government had any standing its delegates were entitled to immunity from arrest, and the procedure therefore seemed to indicate that the provisional government was, after all, not recognised in the Dominion. The longed-for peaceful solution was endangered too by the arrival of a party of American troops at Pembina and by an American survey party led by William Marshall with the purpose of surveying for a railway to join Fort Garry to the Northern Pacific Railway. Nothing came from either movement, but they underlined the interests of America and the possibilities of America as an alternative to Canada. More dangerous was the news that a military expedition from Canada was in hand, and that many Canadians wished it to be made up of volunteers, who would almost of necessity be hostile to the *métis* and the provisional government, and animated by a desire to avenge Scott. The English settlers, too, were so angry when they heard of the secret amendments to the 'List of Rights' that they refused to accept

it and, in particular, rejected a new last clause which demanded a complete amnesty, which would have covered the execution of Scott as well as all else.

There was a real possibility that the delegates, discredited as they were, would fail, and that all would depend on ability to resist the military expedition—and perhaps on American help. Even when news came that the delegates were freed and discussions were proceeding the tension remained, for the expedition was afoot. The home government had agreed to send 250 soldiers, and though it was provided that the government of Canada must have reached agreement with the settlers before the troops moved in, there was the possibility that the troops might nevertheless reach the settlement before the full legal transfer of the territory had taken place. So the Company was persuaded to appoint Sir John Young, Governor-General of Canada, as Governor of Rupert's Land. Young could then, if necessary, appoint a deputy governor who would by this expedient derive his authority from the Company, in case Company rule should still, according to the strict letter of the law, be effective at Red River when the troops got there. In the event Sir John Young, on the advice of his Privy Council, rejected this expedient. But by then (26th May) negotiations had proceeded so fast and so smoothly that this legal point seemed unimportant. The Colony and Canada had agreed their terms.

The Governor, Sir Stafford Northcote, was himself in Ottawa to represent the Company and to facilitate these arrangements. It was the Colonial Secretary himself who had made the suggestion, in response to a plea that the Company had had no direct representation at the negotiations since Donald Smith acted as a commissioner from Canada, not as a Company officer. The Governor-General had wondered whether news of the Company's representation might hold up the delegates from the settlement and so, again at the suggestion of the Colonial Office, Northcote had delayed his departure until the delegates were on their way. There was indeed a possibility that Northcote might cause such a reaction, for Thibeault had written that the Company greatly complicated negotiations and that 'Le peuple veut traiter directement avec le Gouvernement Canadien, et ne veut nullement qu'il y soit fait mention de la Compagnie'. Even the Protestant Bishop, who thought that the Company had been, and was, an inestimable blessing to the country, acknowledged that there was intense feeling against the Company, and with the departure of William Mactavish (who died soon after his arrival in England) the Company had diminished in stature. The Company took

the view that the transfer had really been effected on 1st December, and that since that date it had merely been an interested party, as a trader only, and entitled to compensation for any expenses incurred on behalf of government; and though it did not press for immediate settlement of its claims it maintained them to the full.

The Colonial Office's terms for sending up troops were fulfilled before they left Canada. Terms were agreed with the settlers when the three delegates, having successfully insisted that they be recognised as speaking for the provisional government, which was thereby recognised, presented their revised 'List of Rights' and the Canadian government made those terms the basis of the Manitoba Act. The name Manitoba, instead of Assiniboia, was something of a concession to Riel, and its admission as a Province and not as a Territory conceded his point. But the area of the new province was little greater than that of Assiniboia and his feeling for a unified North-west was put on one side since such a vast province would have outweighed Quebec and Ontario and would have given to the small handful of settlers control over the vast resources which Canada must control if communications and settlement were ever to be possible. The rest of Rupert's Land and the North-west were to remain in the Dominion's control, and although it may be argued that this was against the spirit of the British North America Act and of the Rupert's Land Act because it allowed the development of these resources for Dominion purposes instead of for the purposes of the province and territory, that after all had been the object of all the negotiations since the Crown had agreed to act as intermediary for the transfer of the territory to Canada; and Canada had to recompense the Company.

This was at last done, when the Manitoba Act had been passed. The Deed of Surrender was sent to the Colonial Office on 7th May; on 10th May the Company received the agreed payment of £300,000 and on 23rd June an Order in Council formally completed the transfer from the Company and the admission to the Dominion, with effect from 15th July, 1870. At last, and undeniably, the Company had ceased to rule. Its trade, the outfit for 1870, was organised and well on its way; it was the chief store and the centre of the economic life of Red River. But it had no other claims and no other responsibilities save such as its knowledge, its personal ties, and its trade posts with their land-titles, gave. It was, however, the mainstay of life for much of the population of the North-west, and as the Committee began to lay out a sum of about £80,000 for the shipment outwards of 1870 it turned to the Colonial Office to ask for

security against raids by the provisional government and to point out, as of old, that if the Company failed to ship goods out the Indians would starve.

This was true, and historic; but such a guarantee was not needed. When Colonel Garnet Wolseley had safely brought his expedition to Red River on 22nd August he was ahead of the Lieutenant-Governor, Adams G. Archibald, a Nova Scotian who spoke French and from whom the *métis* expected sympathetic consideration. Riel and the provisional government were ruling, as Riel had always insisted that they must rule in the interval between the Company's laying down of authority and the constitution of a full provincial government within the Dominion. But over Riel hung responsibility for the death of Scott, and the delegates to Ottawa, and even Bishop Taché, had not been able to secure a complete and categorical amnesty which would indemnify him on that score though Macdonald had authorised the Bishop to promise him payment of a thousand dollars. The money did not pass, and as the troops approached the village of Winnipeg, Riel and O'Donoghue took horse, swam the Red River, and began their journey to exile in the United States. There was no resistance to Wolseley; he had proclaimed his task as a mission of peace, not of war, and Riel had so completely accepted the terms of the Manitoba Act that he had published Wolseley's proclamation in the settlement and would probably have gone out to welcome him but for fear that the amnesty would not extend to himself.

Governor Archibald, when he arrived, was unable to prevent some victimisation and some petty revenge on the *métis*, for such a winter was bound to have left its mark in feuds and mistrust. But it was, on the whole, a peaceful and prosperous province which entered the Dominion; and at the heart of its economy stood the Company which had stood by the settlement against the North West Company, had supplied and governed the colony during the long years of the Simpson régime, had countered American traders and American ambitions, and had at the last held the settlers steady as Riel split them; and had then begun again to supply and to trade with them. When all was over Donald Smith (who had met and consulted with Northcote at Montreal) went back to Red River with the troops. He had been made President of the Council of the Northern Department, and as the new arrangements came into force he was instrumental in making terms for the fur-traders; under the revised Deed Poll of 1871 he became the Company's Chief Commissioner and held that office until he parted from the fur trade in 1874. He then became Land Commissioner for the Company and eventually

secured a place on the Board in 1883 in the course of a dispute over land-development policy.

Donald Smith was to end his career as a peer of the realm, as Governor of the Company, and as the holder of the greatest individual fortune which had been made in the Company. He set his mark on the Company as it developed from the changes wrought by the Deed of Surrender in a way which can only be compared with Simpson's shaping of the fur-trade empire created by the coalition with the North West Company; and for Donald Smith, over the years, the policy was a policy of encouragement of retail trade, of the realisation of land values, and of development of investment and subsidiary interests.

The changes, however, were neither sudden nor complete. Even the transfer of the territory to the Dominion was not yet over, not even with the passing of the Manitoba Act. For although the British Treasury guaranteed the floating of a loan by the Canadian government, to pay the Company, the Company then claimed that the delays in the transfer had caused it losses and demanded recompense. In 1869 the Committee had yielded to the Colonial Office's pressure and had agreed to the Deed of Surrender. The Committee had then adjourned early in August; the corporate seal of the Company would be affixed to the Deed of Surrender as soon as the Governor signified, and Northcote had in fact done so on 19th November, with 1st December as the date agreed for transfer—a date fixed by Canada and supported by Her Majesty's Government. The subsequent delays and ineptitudes had not been of the Company's making, and they had left a claim for interest on the £300,000 from 1st December, when it was due, to 10th May, when it was paid. Non-payment had led to a delay in dividend issue and so to a fall in the price of the stock; but the Committee passed that over. But claims for losses of trade and for goods taken from the Company's store amounted to a further £30,843, with the sums which the Provincial Government had 'borrowed' from Mactavish. Kimberley at the Colonial Office was sympathetic, as became a former Governor of the Company; but he was unhelpful, and he denied all responsibility on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. He offered, however, to urge Canada to pay interest on the £300,000 if the other claims were withdrawn, and on this basis the Company entered into direct negotiations with the Canadian government.

As these last stages of the surrender of the fur trade to settlement in the fertile belt dragged out, Donald Smith and the fur-traders were giving evidence that the Deed of Surrender, vital as it was in the

history of the Dominion of Canada, affected the trade of the Company but little. For the years immediately before and after the Deed of Surrender were but little different from each other, and little different from the long tradition of the Company's history. Smith hoped to increase the Company's retail trade as population at Winnipeg increased, he discussed the merits and the prices of Canadian woollens as against the English product; there was discussion of the design for a paddle-steamer to tow cargo up from York Fort to the Rock Depot, a ship's officer was discharged 'in consequence of intemperance', and the petty traders in the eastern townships were to be opposed by the payment of good cash prices in such limited areas as were necessary 'for the protection of the Company's frontier'. Beaver was up by twenty per cent. in the 1869 sales, while musquash was likely to show a glut and mink was 'getting unfashionable' in the United States; the Standard of Trade was adjusted accordingly, and although the expected decline in the value of mink proved illusory, beaver held its value owing to a modification in the Russian import duties. Athabaska remained the most valuable district to the fur trade, the management of the Columbia Department was revised and split into two, and while the Council of the Northern Department turned with all its old zest to the timing of the brigades, the improvement of canoes and boats and the mending of portages, Donald Smith reported that the general business throughout the Northern Department was in promising order.

But if the Adventurers of England were still trading into Hudson's Bay, and if furs were still their principal article of trade, they had come to the end of a notable chapter. They had indeed (as the Grand Seigneur of the Company has written) materially altered the history of the lands to which they sailed; and, as the lands themselves altered, the old Charter came into its own yet once more. The Company had fulfilled the words of the original grant and had set going 'one of our Plantacions or Colonyes in America'. The Company had, indeed, stood god-father (for the settlers themselves must always be the true origins of settlement) both on the Pacific coast and in the remote prairies. But whereas Vancouver Island and British Columbia had never been within the terms of the Charter, and so passed early and easily from the Company's rule, Manitoba had been placed under the Company's government two centuries ago. It was therefore necessary, as the supplemental Charter granted in 1884 put it, that 'certain rights of government and other rights and privileges granted by the said original Charter' be duly surrendered to Her Majesty. That done, the Adventurers continued to trade, and they traded ever

more widely. But they had for the first time in two hundred years accepted an alteration of their Charter.

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